"If you love Rumi, Hafiz, The Tao, if you love words dancing out of the mystery, welcome to *The Radiance Sutras*: these are among the most profound and luminous verses you will ever read."

JACK KORNFIELD, author of *A Path with Heart*

The Radiance Sutras

112 Gateways to the Yoga of Wonder & Delight

Lorin Roche, PhD

Foreword by Shiva Rea

THE RADIANCE SUTRAS

112 Gateways to the Yoga of Wonder & Delight

Lorin Roche, PhD



Lift a cup of *soma* in praise
to Lakshman Joo

. . . a round of *soma* on my tab
to his students
Lilian Silburn, Paul Reps, Jaideva Singh,
Alexis Sanderson, and
John and Denise Hughes

A case of *amrita* to
Panini and Company

Ambrosia on tap to Rabindranath Tagore

Bombay Sapphire to
Otto Bohtlingk, Rudolph Roth, and
Sir Monier-Williams

And a pet anteater
To Valmiki

Translating the nectar of wisdom
of the wisdom traditions
is the work of centuries

Contents

Foreword

In your hands, you hold a treasure.

The Radiance Sutras, the life-work of beloved writer and teacher Lorin Roche, is a contemporary interpretation of the timeless, universal meditations of the Vijnana Bhairava Tantra. The 112 contemplative meditations known as both *yuktis* and *dharanas* unfold as a sacred exchange between the divine masculine as Shiva, or Bhairava, and the divine feminine as Shakti, or Bhairavi. This sacred teaching was revered by the great sages of tantra, including Kshemaraja in the 11th century through this last century's yoga masters Swami Lakshman Joo, the yogini Lalita Devi, and Swami Muktananda.

The Vijnana Bhairava Tantra provides a way into the universal realization of divine embodiment that is developed fully within the tantras. Universal, sensual, very human experiences such as breathing, tasting, seeing, waking up, sleeping, getting angry, and making love become vehicles for realizing your nature. This happens at a deep level of vibration through the living current, *spanda shakti,* the pulsating source of consciousness of the early Trika-Krama lineages of tantra that knew of the quantum wave long before modern physics.

When I received the original draft of the Radiance Sutras from Lorin in 2006, I was enthralled by such somatic kinship with his poetic interpretation of the sutras of the Vijnana Bhairava Tantra. I was already in love with the Vijnana. When I was fifteen, I'd discovered it in Paul Reps' book *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones.* Later, I'd encountered it through the translation my root teacher, Daniel Odier, received from Lalita Devi, a realized yogini from Kashmir.

Lorin's offering reignited a flame, and knowing Lorin is like finding a rare soul friend on the path who also shares a great love. Lorin brings to life the revolutionary insights of the early tantras so that they transform the material way we continue to experience our bodies—despite living in the quantum age of physics, which recognizes our body as vastly composed of space and vibration. Lorin poetically translates the experience of *spanda,* "the creative vibration," as always expanding and contracting, creating feelings, thoughts, or actions and then dissolving back into space.

Attend to the skin as a subtle boundary
Containing vastness.
Enter that pulsing vastness
And know there is no other but you.
YUKTI 25

With Lorin's blessing I have included *The Radiance Sutras,* along with other scholarly translations, in Prana Flow teacher trainings to explore the transforming effect of the sutras within the living flow of yoga. I offer lines of the Radiance Sutras as an invocation, during the hovering space of a mudra or asana, and as a meditation to end a session. They offer ways of changing stiffness into fluidity, replacing density with shimmering energy, transforming separation into the sacred flow satisfied within. Students memorize lines and other teachers integrate the sutras into their classes. *The*

Radiance Sutras has become part of our living library, because you can imbibe the teachings at any time and feel the reverberations. As you take in the sutra, the wisdom begins to transform you instantaneously.

The breath flows out with the sound *sa,*
The breath flows in with the sound *ha.*
Thus thousands of times a day,
Everyone who breathes is adoring the Goddess.
Know this, and be in great joy.
Listen to the ongoing prayer that is breath.
Life shall dance in you
A dance of ever-renewing delight.
VERSES 155–156

In the flow of yoga, breath is the path of realization. In most contemporary yoga the *bhava,* or feeling essence, is substituted with technique. Lorin has a way of expressing the rhythm of the sensory somatic world and how its undulations and "song of the body" are part of the very flow of consciousness. The simple flow of breath, which for most modern practitioners is trapped under tensions and internal neglect, transforms into the most intimate connection to the sublime source.

Be conscious of this unconscious prayer (of your breath),
For She is the most holy place of pilgrimage.
She wishes for you to enter this temple,
Where each breath is adoration
Of the infinite for the incarnate form.
VERSE 154

The Radiance Sutras is the culmination of forty-plus years of devotion to this sacred text, as well as Lorin Roche's life experience as a beloved meditation teacher and master writer-poet. Lorin has brought the Vijnana Bhairava Tantra alive for a wide audience in a way similar to how Coleman Barks revived the poetry of the great Sufi teacher, Jelauddin Rumi. These poetic interpretations have brought the vibratory wisdom of the tantras to the most neglected places within Western embodiment, as Lorin breathes a rhythm and life to language through his own realization. He has opened a doorway into the tantric realization of the *divya deha,* the divine body, the shimmering flow of embodied consciousness manifesting as Shakti and returning to infinite potency as Shiva.

It is with great celebration that this edition—complete with Sanskrit Devanagari script, transliteration, and pronunciation—goes out into the world. *The Radiance Sutras* are spreading across the world. Beloved musicians Dave Stringer, Donna DeLory, Denise Kaufman, and Steve Gold compose to these poetic truths. Lorin, with his beautiful wife Camille, have been dedicated to this text with their life and you can feel that in their care.

Meditate on the Self as being Vast as the sky, a body of energy

Extending forever in all directions.
YUKTI 69

Your heart sees by its own light.
In meditation, adore the subtle fire
The light that you see by
Is the light that comes from inside.
YUKTI 14

May we all awaken to the inner light of the heart—the ripple effect that has immeasurable blessings and benefits to all. May this sacred resonance attune us all to the living sublime current. As the Vijnana Bhairava so eloquently invokes through Lorin,

Being transformed by even one of these practices,
Fullness of experience develops breath by breath.
One day the desire of the self for the great Self
Is consummated
VERSE 148

Be prepared, for you will not be the same person you were before you began reading. One of these sutras is enough to change a life.

SHIVA REA
Malibu, California
August 2014

PRELUDE



The Vijnana Bhairava Tantra is one of the early teachings on yoga meditation. The name, loosely translated, means “the terror and joy of realizing oneness with the soul.” The text is only about two thousand words in the original Sanskrit, perhaps forty minutes of chanting, yet those few words describe the essence of many of the world’s meditation techniques. I call it “the Radiance Sutras” because it is so luminous.

This text is part of the ancient tantras, although how ancient we cannot say exactly. The first written version appeared in Kashmir around AD 800. Before that, it may have been handed down through the oral tradition, which means that it was memorized and chanted for generations.

In ancient texts such as the Rig Veda, the word *tantra* refers to the technology of weaving—“a loom, the warp.” There is the image of stretching or weaving threads in patterns across the framework of a loom. Metaphorically, a tantra is a tapestry of knowledge weaving together the threads of yoga technique.

A tantra is not poetry, although it may sound that way in the original Sanskrit and in translation. A tantra is a manual of practices. This one is a compendium of yoga meditation instructions, set as a conversation between lovers. Its focus is on full-body spirituality and accepting every breath, sensual experience, and emotion as doorways to deep and intimate contact with the energies of life.

A translation of this tantra came into my hands more than forty years ago, and I have worked with the methods every day since then. It has been a love affair, and I am blessed. One day I started to write a fresh version and it evolved into this book.

A LANGUAGE OF LOVE

The Bhairava Tantra is set as a conversation between the Goddess Who Is the Creative Power of the Universe and the God Who Is the Consciousness that Permeates Everywhere. For short, they call each other Devi and Bhairava, or Shakti and Shiva. They are lovers and inseparable partners, and one of their favorite places of dwelling is in the human heart.

This text feels as though it were composed by a couple, a man and a woman who sang the verses to each other as they co-created. As was the convention of the time, the authors chose to be anonymous and frame the conversation as one between the Goddess and the God in them. The text has the feeling of one richly experienced body speaking with love to another body.

Their inquiry is about how to enter into the vibrant essence of the world with the dual balance

of passion and detachment. The teaching emerges from their love-play, reminding us that from within our own hearts we are educated in the spirit of love. They lived this teaching. The secret pathways in the body and the flow of delicious energies are revealed in words that one friend or lover would speak to another. The text invites us to be at home in the universe by accepting every intense experience, every sensual delight, every ordinary moment, as a gateway to the divine.

The conversation begins with Devi asking, “Beloved, tell me, how do I enter more deeply into the reality of the universe?” In reply, Bhairava describes 112 techniques for becoming enlightened through everyday life experience. Each of these techniques is a way of attending to the rhythms, pulsations, and sensuousness of the divine energy that we are made of and that flows through us always. As we engage with these meditation techniques, we are alerted to the presence of the sacred that permeates our bodies. All of these methods involve savoring the incredible intensity underlying the most common experiences. They work by activating the senses, by extending the range of the senses further into the inner and the outer world. The basic dynamics of life—breathing, falling asleep, waking up, walking, loving—are all used as gateways to alignment and enlightenment.

Each meditation is a deep dive into aliveness, into the underlying reality of what life is. Balance is there at every step; the unshakable serenity of the depths is used as a foundation so that we can tolerate the electrifying vastness of the universe. We are invited to cross the threshold, to walk by the guardian of the gate, to face our terrors, and make our way into the immense and timeless mystery that is always calling.

Many of these meditation techniques are surprisingly informal: Notice a powerful emotion, sensation, or desire, and enter into that awareness with total abandon, so that you go with it right into the root movement of the universe. When making love, put your awareness into the flame of passion pulsating through the body and become that flame. Falling asleep, pay attention to the transition from waking consciousness to unconsciousness, and catch a glimpse of what consciousness itself is. Or go outside on a moonless night and simply merge with the darkness and vastness of space.

The text also describes what we think of as traditional yoga meditations—ways of savoring breath, sound, and internal luminosity. The intimacy with the self implied in these teachings means that tantra is not a set of techniques imposed from outside. Rather, the method emerges naturally from one’s relationship with the self and with life. Lose yourself in intense experience, and find your Self. In this text, the word *yoga* is used in its etymological sense, “the act of joining, linking together.” Yoga is *connecting*—connecting all the elements and levels of your being.

The tone of the text is playful and exploratory—jump in and feel everything. *Lila* is Sanskrit for “play,” “amusement,” and the sense that the universe has been manifested as an act of play by the divine. Through play, find your way. In play, find freedom, revelation, illumination.

MEDITATION AS EMBRACE

Taken as a whole, the teaching of the Vijnana Bhairava Tantra is startling in its breadth, in the huge range of human experience that it encompasses. It shatters the picture we have of what meditation is or how meditation is often presented—as a way of dissociating from the human experience and trying to rise above it. There is not a hint of the usual life denial that permeates and

distorts spirituality East and West.

This tantra is about going deeply into experience, embracing it fully, without reservation. Nature is embraced, as is all of human nature. Lust and passion become fires that illumine, and gusto is taken to its most refined degree possible. Meditation is presented as the nexus or meeting ground of light and matter, spirit and flesh, and the meeting is to be consummated with great joy. Tantric meditation is an integration of the opposites, not obliteration or mere transcendence of them. It is an alchemical union in which each polarity exists in its fullness and in a relationship of complementarity with the other.

You'll find here in one place many of the essential techniques utilized in meditation traditions the world over. If some of the experiences that the sutras describe seem familiar to you as you read this book, it may be because you have invented your own private meditation techniques, ones you probably never tell anyone about. Or you may have had inexplicable realizations in the midst of some life experience.

People who come for instruction in meditation usually have one or more of these awareness practices vibrating in their body already, spontaneously. This is what propels them to search. Sutras such as these are here to remind us of what we already know. They are here to invite us to go more deeply into the experience of being human.

It is likely that the same meditation techniques are invented or discovered independently around the world in different cultures, whenever people start paying attention to the subtle energies of the body. If this is true, then the Radiance Sutras is a syllabus of the types of techniques that could be discovered anywhere. In my experience, they are discovered and rediscovered continually, by all lovers of life.

THIS VERSION

For the last twenty-five years, the text has been waking me up at four in the morning, purring Sanskrit in my ear and calling me to come out and play. I walk around in the predawn for a few hours, whispering the words of the timeless language, letting it teach me about itself. In this way, the Sanskrit has sung itself into modern English.

The original Sanskrit of the Bhairava Tantra has a musical, mantric quality that massages the nerves like no other language I have ever heard. Sanskrit, like tantric meditation, is a union of opposites. The opposites embrace each other, as lovers do, as the eternally fascinating polarity of male and female, day and night, sun and moon.

Sanskrit sings of rhythm, vibrancy, and the transmutation of terror into ecstasy, fear into movement, stasis into electricity. It evokes flow, tenderness, intimacy with oneself and the universe, informality, attentiveness, and responsiveness. Devi's opening statement to Bhairava gets my vote for one of the most enchanting phrases I have ever heard in any language. Chant it softly to yourself and listen:

shrutam deva maya sarvam rudra yamala sambhavam.

"Beloved, I have been listening to the hymns of creation."

Many types of translations—academic, literary, historical, etymological—can be done of this tantra, and yet each conveys only a small part of its meaning. This version is a *bhashantaram,* a rendering of the text into the vernacular and a migration or reincarnation into another tongue.

The language of the sutras is brief, meant to be read over and over. Each Sanskrit verse is only thirty-two syllables, intricately woven and saturated with the power of bliss *(anandashakti).* Just as all of life is interconnected, one word of Sanskrit may have a spectrum of interconnected meanings, encompassing the realms of meditation, music, cooking, medicine, alchemy, sex, ritual worship, art, dance, theater, astronomy, astrology, and mathematics. These definitions are full of physical images that give clues to how to practice.

For example, the word *yoga* has the central meaning of "joining things together," or "hooking up." The first definition of yoga listed in the Monier-Williams *Sanskrit-English Dictionary* is "the act of yoking, joining, attaching, putting to (of horses)." If we look up the English phrase "putting to," we see that it is a British expression for hitching up a horse, "attaching the harness to the load." *Yoga* also means "equipping or arraying an army, fixing an arrow on the bowstring, putting on of armor," and in medicine, "a remedy or cure." *Yoga* can refer to any junction—in astronomy and astrology, a conjunction of the stars or planets; in grammar, the connection of words together; in arithmetic, addition, sum, total. In alchemy or chemistry, mixing different materials together is yoga. In spirituality, *yoga* can mean the union of the soul with matter, the union of the individual soul with the universal soul, and the disciplines that serve this union.

If we take these images metaphorically, they are saying, "Get connected to your horsepower, the magic animal of your being. Arrange your forces. Put on your protection. Do the practices in a way that is a remedy, a cure, for you. Know the stars that guide you." These are apt metaphors —*yuktarupaka*—for meditative experience.

TANTRA

The word *tantra* has interesting resonances, each of which provides a vital clue to how to practice. The *tan* of *tantra* has a wide range of meanings, including "to extend, stretch, spread, shine." When this root sound made its way West, it became *ten,* and we use it all the time when we say *extend, tendon, tender, tension, entertain, intensity,* and *attention.* To practice tantra is to stretch ourselves, to extend our capacity for attention to the utmost. Tantra is also the pattern of interconnectedness we discover when we practice. Tenderness is important. This text is tender in its approach to human experience and encourages an earthy reverence in embracing your bodily sensations.

Tantra denotes "theory or system" and often refers to a class of texts that are set as a conversation between the gods and goddesses—in this case, Bhairava and Devi. The *tra* of *tantra* means "technique." The same root shows up in *mantra* (*manas,* "mind," plus *tra,* "skill," means "a tool of thought").

Each verse of a tantra is called a *sutra* (there's *tra* again), which means "thread" and is cognate with "sew" and "suture," the thread that joins together. "Seam" and "couture" are also cousins of *sutra.* So with the words *tantra* and *sutra,* we are presented with images of skillfully weaving together all the elements of life—mind, body, emotions, breath, soul, individuality, and infinity—into one exquisite tapestry. (Wordplay was a major form of entertainment in the tantric tradition, so there are often dozens of alternate or "folk" etymologies for these words.)

Jnana (sometimes spelled *gyan*) is "knowledge, to know." *Vijnana* means worldly, practical knowledge and skill. In this context, *vijnana* refers to your "knowledge body"—*vijnanamayakosha,* the dimension of your body that is in direct practical contact with the mysteries of life.

Life refreshes and evolves itself through a symphony of ongoing rhythms. Brains have *waves,* hearts *pulsate,* breath *oscillates,* the senses *vibrate.* Tantra can be thought of as attending to these rhythms. Breath is a rhythm, and we breathe in and out thousands of times a day. Breathing involves an intimate relationship between our bodies and the ocean of air within which we suspire. A dozen senses inform us of the rhythm, texture, and qualities in each breath. Life is always inviting us into a deeper relationship with breath, with the pulsing of our hearts and emotions.

READING THE SUTRAS AND PRACTICES

In part I, "The Radiance Sutras," there are three forms of Sanskrit included with each sutra. The first form is Devanagari, which looks like this:

|| विज्ञान भैरव ||

The second form is a transliteration into Roman letters with diacritical marks to indicate pronunciation:

dhāmāntaḥkṣobhasambhūtasūkṣmāgnitilakākṛtim

The third form of Sanskrit given is just the raw individual words, spelled out phonetically to give a rough approximation of the pronunciation:

daamaantah kshobha sambhootah sookshma agnih tilaka akritim

There are two numbers for most of the verses. The number accompanying the Sanskrit transliteration is the *verse number,* from 1 to 162. Devi and Bhairava banter for 23 verses, and then verse 24 marks the beginning of the "112 yogas"—meditations, techniques, known in Sanskrit as *yuktis* or *dharanas.* These yuktis are also numbered, from 1 to 112.

You can follow the yukti numbers to their counterparts in part II, "Invitations and Illuminations." There I unpack some of the juiciest Sanskrit words to shed additional light on each meditation, as a way of allowing you to explore that technique more deeply.

SAVORING THE SUTRAS

The Radiance Sutras is a text to savor one phrase at a time, over a period of days or years. The verses are designed so you can read or listen to them for a lifetime and have a new revelation every day. Each of the meditations is meant to be experienced many times under many different

conditions. As you become familiar with the practices, you will discover the tactile luminosity and improvisational music of your inner world. As your internal senses become more alert, doorway after doorway will open to you.

The text wants to be thought and spoken in English as well as Sanskrit—whispered, chanted, delighted in, and danced. I am letting the text sing itself back into the spoken word. The sutras remember they were once songs—*caryagita,* songs of realization. Experiment with reading them out loud to yourself or to another person.

The language is crafted so that you may be able to recognize your own innate spiritual experience and have a flash of recognition. The Bhairava Tantra is a love song between energy and consciousness or Shakti and Shiva, and the musical and mantric impulses of their creativity are pulsing in us always. These verses are an invitation to wake up to the marvelous symphony within and around us.

When you discover one sutra that resonates deeply, memorize it. Then you will, as they say, know it by heart. Something happens in the body when you can say a sutra out loud or quietly to yourself. There is a relaxation, an ease and confidence, when you can rest your attention inside a sutra and the words flow effortlessly.

Tantric texts want to be performed. They are not comfortable being hidden in books. Any time you read a phrase tenderly and let yourself be carried away, even for a minute, you are performing a sacred act, offering your attention to the mystery of being alive.

The sutras tend to lay the groundwork for each other, but you don't have to go through them in sequence. Some of the techniques will speak to you now, and others will only have meaning after you have explored them for a while. When I began meditating, the techniques in the first few sutras and one in the middle kept me busy for a year. Your pace may be faster or slower.

One way to explore the text is to pick one technique—whichever one strikes you—and practice it for three months. Give it time to work. Then read the sutras again and see if it is time to move on or to include another technique in addition to the one that you have been doing. The "Invitations and Illuminations" section following the sutras gives some tips for going deeper into the exquisite world of these practices. The text says that if you go deeply into even one of these ways of experience, making it your own over time, you will awaken.

Meditation is *sambhava,* intimacy with what you love about life. Take one thing and go deeper and deeper into it. Dive into your entire sensorium so fearlessly that you go beyond it into the core of your being and rest there.

Love calls our attention and engages us. When we give love our tender attention, we are in the realm of tantra. Life is a mysterious, self-renewing process. The techniques of meditation are ways of allowing the ecstasy of the life-force at play to renew our bodies and souls. Ask your body to teach you and to take you on adventures into intimacy with your own essence. This is the yoga of wonder and delight.

PART ONE



THE RADIANCE SUTRAS

विज्ञान भैरव तन्त्र

vijñāna bhairava tantra

Banter Verses

The Bhairava Tantra is framed as a conversation between lovers, Devi and Bhairava. Devi is the Creative Energy permeating the universe. Her nature is power, strength, and might. Bhairava is the infinite consciousness that embraces her.

In the initial verses, Devi is speaking from within her awe at existence. She assumes the body of a seeker of truth and dares Bhairava to reveal to her the secrets of yoga. Rising to the occasion, Bhairava accepts her questions as beautiful and invites her to accompany him on the path of intimacy with all life. In verses 1–23, they converse back and forth in this way.

BANTER VERSES 1–2



श्री देव्युवाच ।
श्रुतं देव मया सर्वं रुद्रयामलसम्भवम् ।
त्रिकभेदमशेषेण सारात्सारविभागशः ॥१॥
अद्यापि न निवृत्तो मे संशयः परमेश्वर ।
किं रूपं तत्त्वतो देव शब्दराशिकलामयम् ॥२॥

śrī devyuvāca |
śrutaṁ deva mayā sarvaṁ rudrayāmala sambhavam |
trika bhedam aśeṣeṇa sārāt sāra vibhāgaśaḥ || 1 ||
adyāpi na nivṛtto me saṁśayaḥ parameśvara
kiṁ rūpaṁ tattvato deva śabda rāśi kalā mayam || 2 ||

shree devee uvaacha
shrutam deva mayaa sarvam rudrayaa-mala sam-bhavam
trika-bhedam a-sheshena saaraat–saara-vi-bhaagashah
adya api na ni-vritto me sam-shayah parama–eeshvara
kim roopam tattvatah deva shabda–raashi kalaamayam

One day the Goddess sang to her lover, Bhairava:

Beloved and radiant lord of the space before birth,
Revealer of essence,
Slayer of the ignorance that binds us,

You who in play have created this universe
And permeated all forms in it
With never-ending truth,
I have been wondering . . .

I have been listening to the hymns of creation,
Enchanted by the verses,
Yet still I am curious.

What is this delight-filled universe
Into which we find ourselves born?
What is this mysterious awareness
Shimmering everywhere within it?

BANTER VERSES 3–4



किं वा नवात्मभेदेन भैरवे भैरवाकृतौ ।
त्रिशिरोभेदभिन्नं वा किं वा शक्तित्रयात्मकम् ॥३॥
नादबिन्दुमयं वापि किं चन्द्रार्धनिरोधिकाः ।
चक्रारूढमनच्कं वा किं वा शक्तिस्वरूपकम् ॥४॥

kiṁ vā navātma bhedena bhairave bhairavākṛtau |
triśirobheda bhinnaṁ vā kiṁ vā śakti trayātmakam || 3 ||
nāda bindu mayaṁ vāpi kiṁ candrārdha nirodhikāḥ |
cakrārūḍham anackaṁ vā kiṁ vā śakti svarūpakam || 4 ||

kim vaa nava-aatma-bhedena bhairave bhairava-aakritau
tri-shirah-bheda-abhinnam vaa kim vaa shakti-tri-aatmakam
naada-bindu-mayam vaa api kim chandra-ardha-ni-rodhikaah
chakra-aa-roodham anachkam vaa kim vaa shakti-sva-roopakam

I have been listening to the love songs of
Form longing for formless.

What are these energies
Undulating through our bodies,
Pulsing us into action?

And this "matter" out of which our forms are made—
What are these dancing particles
Of condensed radiance?

Banter Verses 5-6



परापरायाः सकलमपरायाश्च वा पुनः ।
पराया यदि तद्वत्स्यात्परत्वं तद् विरुध्यते ॥५॥

न हि वर्णविभेदेन देहभेदेन वा भवेत् ।
परत्वं निष्कलत्वेन सकलत्वे न तद् भवेत् ॥६॥

प्रसादं कुरु मे नाथ निःशेषं चिन्द्धि संशयम् ।

parāparāyāḥ sakalama parāyāśca vā punaḥ |
parāyā yadi tad vatsyāt paratvaṁ tad virudhyate || 5 ||
na hi varṇa vibhedena dehabhedena vā bhavet |
paratvaṁ niṣkalatvena sakalatve na tad bhavet || 6 ||
prasādaṁ kuru me nātha niḥśeṣaṁ chinddhi saṁśayam |

para-a-paraayaah sakalam a-parayaah cha vaa punah
paraayaa yadi tat vatsyaat paratvam tat vi-rudhyate
na hi varna-vi-bhedena deha-bhedena vaa bhavet
paratvam nish-kalatvena sakalatve na tat bhavet
pra-saadam kuru me naatha
nih-shesham chhindhi sam-shayam

What is this power we call Life,
Appearing as the play of flesh and breath?
How may I know this mystery and enter it more deeply?

My attention is enthralled by a myriad of forms,
Innumerable individual entities everywhere,
Flashing into existence and fading away again.
Lead me into the wholeness beyond all these parts.

Do me a favor, my love.
Let me rest in your embrace.
Refresh me with the elixir of your wisdom.
Ravish me with your truth.

Banter Verses 7–9



श्री देव्युवाच ।

साधु साधु त्वया पृष्टं तन्त्रसारम् इदम् प्रिये ॥७॥

गूहनीयतमम् भद्रे तथापि कथयामि ते ।
यत्किञ्चित्सकलं रूपं भैरवस्य प्रकीर्तितम् ॥८॥

तद् असारतया देवि विज्ञेयं शक्रजालवत् ।
मायास्वप्नोपमं चैव गन्धर्वनगरभ्रमम् ॥९॥

bhairava uvāca |
sādhu sādhu tvayā pṛṣṭaṁ tantra sāram idam priye || 7 ||
gūha nīyatamam bhadre tathāpi kathayāmi te |
yat kiñcit sakalaṁ rūpaṁ bhairavasya prakīrtitam || 8 ||
tad asāra tayā devi vijñeyaṁ śakra jālavat |
māyā svapnopamaṁ caiva gandharva nagara bhramam || 9 ||

bhairava uvaacha
saadhu saadhu tvayaa prishtam tantra–saaram idam priye
gooha-neeyatamam bhadre tatha api kathayaami te
yat kinchit sakalam roopam bhairavasya pra-keertitam
tat a-saaratayaa devi vi-jneyam shakra jaalavat
maayaa–svapna-upamam cha eva gandharva–nagara–bhramam

Bhairava replies,

Beloved, your questions
Touch the heart of wonder,
The path of intimacy with all life—
Weaving together body and soul,
Sex and spirit, individuality and universality.

This is my Cave of Secrets.
Your inquiry has led you here.
I feel your fingers on my pulse.

Come with me.
Leave behind everything you know.
The teachings about me are
A light show put on by the celestial musicians,
As beautiful and insubstantial as clouds.

BANTER VERSES 10-12



ध्यानार्थम् भ्रान्तबुद्धीनां क्रियाडम्बरवर्तिनाम् ।
केवलं वर्णितम् पुंसां विकल्पनिहतात्मनाम् ॥१०॥
तत्त्वतो न नवात्मासौ शब्दराशिर् न भैरवः ।
न चासौ त्रिशिरा देवो न च शक्तित्रयात्मकः ॥११॥
नादबिन्दुमयो वापि न चन्द्रार्धनिरोधिकाः ।
न चक्रक्रमसम्भिन्नो न च शक्तिस्वरूपकः ॥१२॥

dhyānārtham bhrānta buddhīnāṁ kriyāḍambara vartinām |
kevalaṁ varṇitam puṁsāṁ vikalpa nihatātmanām || 10 ||
tattvato na navātmāsau śabda rāśir na bhairavaḥ |
na cāsau triśirā devo na ca śakti trayātmakaḥ || 11 ||
nāda bindu mayo vāpi na candrārdha nirodhikāḥ |
na cakra krama sambhinno na ca śakti svarūpakaḥ || 12 ||

dhyaana-artham bhraanta-buddheenaam
kriyaa-aadambara-vartinam
kevalam varnitam pumsaam vi-kalpa-ni-hataa-aatmanaam
tattvato na nava-aatmaasau shabda-raashih na bhairavah
na cha asau tri-shiraa-devah na cha shakti-tri-aatmakah
naada-bindu-mayah vaa api na chandra-ardha-nirodhikaah
na chakra-krama-sambhinah na cha shakti-sva-roopakah

Elaborate rituals and garish images
May be useful in meditation when your mind is whirling with thoughts
Of sex, money, and power, wandering like an elephant in heat.
Go ahead and use these tools, yet know,
Beating drums and blaring trumpets
Cannot summon the One who is already present.

I am not a collection of incantations
Known only to experts.
I am not a ladder to be climbed,
A sequence for piercing energy centers in your body.
I am not to be found at the end of a long road.
I am right here.

BANTER VERSES 13-14



अप्रबुद्धमतीनां हि एता बलविभीषिकाः ।
मातृमोदकवत्सर्वं प्रवृत्त्यर्थम् उदाहृतम् ॥१३॥
दिक्कालकलनोन्मुक्ता देशोद्देशाविशेषिनी ।
व्यपदेष्टुमशक्यासाव् अकथ्या परमार्थतः ॥१४॥

aprabuddha matīnāṁ hi etā bala vibhīṣikāḥ |
mātṛ modakavat sarvaṁ pravṛtty artham udāhṛtam || 13 ||
dik kāla kalanonmuktā deśoddeśā viśeṣinī |
vyapadeṣṭum aśakyāsāv akathyā paramārthataḥ || 14 ||

aprabuddha-mateenaam hi etaa baala-vi-bheeshikaah
maatri-modakavat sarvam pravritti-artham ud-aahritam
dik-kaala-kalanah un-muktaa deshah ud-deshaa a-vi-sheshinee
vi-apa-deshtum a-shakya asau a-kathyaa parama-arthatah

All the stories about me
Are like tales you tell naughty children—
The goblin is going to come gobble you up!
Or else soothing fables mothers spin
As they hand out sweets.

Leave these fantasies behind.
Let me tell you of the luminous path.

I am beyond measure. I cannot be calculated.
I am beyond space and time.
I am beyond ancient and beyond the future.
There are no directions to me.

BANTER VERSES 15-16



अन्तःस्वानुभवानन्दा विकल्पोन्मुक्तगोचरा ।
यावस्था भरिताकारा भैरवी भैरवात्मनः ॥१५॥
तद् वपुस् तत्त्वतो ज्ञेयं विमलं विश्वपूरणम् ।
एवंविधे परे तत्त्वे कः पूज्यः कश्च तृप्यति ॥१६॥

antaḥ svānubhavānandā vikalponmukta gocarā |
yāvasthā bharitākārā bhairavī bhairavātmanaḥ || 15 ||
tad vapus tattvato jñeyaṁ vimalaṁ viśva pūraṇam |
evaṁ vidhe pare tattve kaḥ pūjyaḥ kaśca tṛpyati || 16 ||

antah sva-anubhava aanandaa vi-kalpah un-muktah gocharaa
yaa ava-sthaa bharita-aakaaraa bhairavee bhairava-aatmanah
tad vapuh tattvatah jneyam vi-malam vishva-pooranam
evam vidhe pare tattve kah poojyah kah cha tripyate

I am always here.
I am the embrace
Of your most intimate experience.

Though I am beyond the intellect,
I am not beyond your daring.

I am the nourishing state of fullness
That is the essence of soul.
You belong to me, and I am yours.

My nature is spotless, completely uncontaminated.
I am not covered up, not even by a billion galaxies.
So who is there to worship and adore?
There is no one to appease.

BANTER VERSES 17-19



एवंविधा भैरवस्य यावस्था परिगीयते ।
सा परा पररूपेण परा देवी प्रकीर्त्तिता ॥१७॥
शक्तिशक्तिमतोर् यद्वद् अभेदः सर्वदा स्थितः ।
अतस् तद्धर्मधर्मित्वात्परा शक्तिः परात्मनः ॥१८॥
न वह्नेर् दाहिका शक्तिर् व्यतिरिक्ता विभाव्यते ।
केवलं ज्ञानसत्तायाम् प्रारम्भोऽयम् प्रवेशने ॥१९॥

evaṁ vidhā bhairavasya yāvasthā parigīyate |
sā parā pararūpeṇa parā devī prakīrtitā || 17 ||
śakti śaktimator yadvad abhedaḥ sarvadā sthitaḥ |
atas tad dharma dharmitvāt parā śaktiḥ parātmanaḥ || 18 ||
na vahner dāhikā śaktir vyatiriktā vibhāvyate |
kevalaṁ jñāna sattāyām prārambho'yam praveśane || 19 ||

evam vidhaa bhairavasya yaa ava-sthaa pari-geeyate
saa para-apara-roopena paraa-devee pra-keertitaa
shakti-shaktimatoh yad vat abhedah sarvadaa sthitah
atah tat dharma-dharmitvaat paraa-shaktih paraa-aatmanah
na vanheh daahikaa-shaktih vi-ati-riktaa vi-bhaavyate
kevalam-jnaana-sattaayaam praa-rambhah ayam pra-veshane

Sacred texts sing of my reality,
But I cannot be found in them,
For I am the one listening.
I am always closer than breath.

Heat and fire are not two separate things.
These are just verbal distinctions.

The Goddess and the One who holds Her
Are one and the same.
We are inseparable.
The way to me is through Her.

BANTER VERSES 20-21



शक्त्यवस्थाप्रविष्टस्य निर्विभागेन भावना ।
तदासौ शिवरूपी स्यात्शैवी मुखम् इहोच्यते ॥२०॥
यथालोकेन दीपस्य किरणैर् भास्करस्य च ।
ज्ञायते दिग्विभागादि तद्वच्छक्त्या शिवः प्रिये ॥२१॥

śakty avasthā praviṣṭasya nirvibhāgena bhāvanā |
tadāsau śiva rūpī syāt śaivī mukham ihocyate || 20 ||
yathālokena dīpasya kiraṇair bhāskarasya ca |
jñāyate digvibhāgādi tadvac chaktyā śivaḥ priye || 21 ||

shakti-avasthaa-pravishtasya nir-vi-bhaagena bhaavanaa
tadaa asau shiva-roopee syaat shaivee-mukham iha uchyate
yathaa aa-lokena deepasya kiranaih bhaaskarasya cha
jnaayate dic-vibhaaga aadi tad vat shaktyaa shivah priye

I am everywhere, infusing everything.
To find me,
Become absorbed in intense experience.
Go all the way.
Be drenched in the energies of life.
Enter the world beyond separation.

The light of a candle reveals a room.
The rays of the sun reveal the world.
So does the divine feminine
Illumine the way to me.

Banter Verses 22-23



श्री देव्युवाच ।

देवदेव त्रिशूलाङ्क कपालकृतभूषण ।
दिग्देशकालशून्या च व्यपदेशविवर्जिता ॥२२॥

यावस्था भरिताकारा भैरवस्योपलभ्यते ।
कैर् उपायैर् मुखं तस्य परा देवि कथम् भवेत् ।
यथा सम्यग् अहं वेद्मि तथा मे ब्रूहि भैरव ॥२३॥

śrī devy uvāca |
deva deva triśūlāṅka kapāla kṛta bhūṣaṇa |
dig deśa kāla śūnyā ca vyapadeśa vivarjitā || 22 ||
yāvasthā bharitā kārā bhairavasyopalabhyate |
kair upāyair mukhaṁ tasya parā devi katham bhavet |
yathā samyag ahaṁ vedmi tathā me brūhi bhairava || 23 ||

shree devee uvaacha
deva deva tri-shoola-anka kapaala-krita-bhooshana
dig-desha-kaala-shoonya cha vi-apa-desha-vi-varjitaa
yaa ava-sthaa bharitaa-kaaraa bhairavasya upa-labhyate
kaih upaayaih mukham tasya para-devee katham bhavet
yathaa samyak aham vedmi tathaa me broohi bhairava

She Who Shines Everywhere sings,

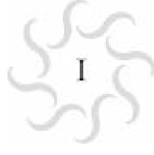
You who hold the mysteries in your hand—
    Of will, knowledge, and action—
Reveal to me this path of illumined knowing.

I long to merge with you,
Be filled with your nourishing essence.
Lead me into joyous union
With the life of the universe,
That I may know it fully,
Realize it deeply,
And breathe in luminous truth.

Yukti Verses

In the body of the Vijnana Bhairava Tantra, Bhairava articulates 112 yuktis, or yoga meditation practices, for opening to the divine mystery within everyday experience.

The practices begin in verse 24 and continue to verse 135. The wide variety of techniques allows each individual to find their doorway into wonder, astonishment, and delight.



भैरव उवाच ।
ऊर्ध्वे प्राणो ह्यधो जीवो विसर्गात्मा परोच्चरेत् ।
उत्पत्तिद्वितयस्थाने भरणाद् भरिता स्थितिः ॥२४॥

śrī bhairava uvāca |
ūrdhve prāṇo hyadho jīvo visargātmā paroccaret |
utpatti dvitaya sthāne bharaṇād bharitā sthitiḥ || 24 ||

shree bhairava uvaacha
oordhve praano hi adhas jeevah visarga–aatmaa paraa ud-charet
ut-patti-dvitaya–sthaane bharanaad bharitaa-sthitih

The One Who Is Intimate to All Beings replies,

Beloved, your questions require the answers that come
Through direct living experience.

The way of experience begins with a breath,
Such as the breath you are breathing now.
Awakening into luminous reality
May dawn in the momentary throb
Between any two breaths.

Exhaling, breath is released and flows out.
There is a pulse as it turns to flow in.
In that turn, you are empty.
Enter that emptiness as the source of all life.

Inhaling, breath flows in, filling, nourishing.
Just as it turns to flow out,
There is a flash of pure joy—
Life is renewed.



मरुतोऽन्तर् बहिर् वापि वियद्युग्मानिवर्तनात् ।
भैरव्या भैरवस्येत्थम् भैरवि व्यज्यते वपुः ॥२५॥

maruto'ntar bahir vāpi viyad yugmānivartanāt |
bhairavyā bhairavasyettham bhairavi vyajyate vapuḥ || 25 ||

marutah antah bahih vaa api viyat-yugma-anivartanaat
bhairavyaa bhairavasya ittham bhairavi vi-ajyate vapuh

Radiant One,

The life essence carries on its play
    Through the pulsing rhythm
Of outward and inward movement.
This is the ceaseless throb, the rhythm of life—
Terrifying in its eternity, exquisite in its constancy.

The inhalation, the return movement of breath,
    Sustains life.
The outgoing breath
    Purifies life.
These are the two poles
Between which respiration goes on unceasingly.
Between them is every delight you could desire.

Even when the senses are turned outward,
Your attention on the external world,
Attend also to the inner throb,
The pulsing of the creative impulse within you.



न व्रजेन् न विशेच्छक्तिर् मरुद्रूपा विकासिते ।
निर्विकल्पतया मध्ये तया भैरवरूपता ॥२६॥

na vrajen na viśec chaktir marud rūpā vikāsite |
nirvikalpatayā madhye tayā bhairava rūpatā || 26 ||

na vrajet na vishet shaktih marut-roopa vi-kaasite
nir-vi-kalpatayaa madhe tayaa bhairava-roopataa

Enter these turning points,
Where the rhythms of life transform
Into each other.

Breath flows in, filling, filling,
In this moment, drink eternity.

Breath flows out, emptying, emptying,
Offering itself to infinity.

Cherishing these moments,
Mind dissolves into heart,
Heart dissolves into space,
Body becomes a vibrating field,
Pulsating between fullness and emptiness.



कुम्भिता रेचिता वापि पूरिता वा यदा भवेत् ।
तदन्ते शान्तनामासौ शक्त्या शान्तः प्रकाशते ॥२७॥

kumbhitā recitā vāpi pūritā vā yadā bhavet |
tad ante śānta nāmāsau śaktyā śāntaḥ prakāśate || 27 ||

kumbhitaa rechitaa vaa api pooritaa yaa yadaa bhavet
tadante shanta naama-asau shaktyaa shantah pra-kaashate

At the end of the exhale,
Breath surrenders to quietude.
For a moment you hang in the balance—
Suspended
In the fertile spaciousness
That is the source of breath.

At the end of the inhale,
Filled with the song of the breath,
There is a moment when you are simply
Holding the tender mystery.

In these interludes,
Experience opens into exquisite vastness
With no beginning and no end.
Embrace this infinity without reservation.
You are its vessel.



आमूलात्किरणाभासां सूक्ष्मात्सूक्ष्मतरात्मिकम् ।
चिन्तयेत्तां द्विषट्कान्ते श्याम्यन्तीम् भैरवोदयः ॥२८॥

āmūlāt kiraṇābhāsāṁ sūkṣmāt sūkṣmatarātmikam |
cintayet tāṁ dviṣaṭkānte śyāmyantīm bhairavodayaḥ || 28 ||

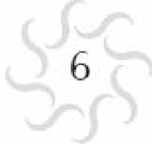
aa-moolaat kirana-aa-bhaasaam sookshmaat sookshma-tara-aatmikam
chintayet taam dvi-shat kaante shaam-yanteem bhairava-udayah

Follow the path of the life force
As she flashes upward like lightning
Through your body.

Attend simultaneously
To the perineum, that bright place
Between the legs,
To the crown of the skull,
And to that shining star-place
Above the head.

Notice this living current
Becoming ever more subtle as she rises,
Radiant as the morning sun,
Until she streams outward from the top of the head
Into all-embracing gratitude.

Thus become intimate with the life of all beings.



उद्गच्छन्तीं तडित्रूपाम् प्रतिचक्रं क्रमात्क्रमम् ।
ऊर्ध्वं मुष्टित्रयं यावत्तावद् अन्ते महोदयः ॥२९॥

udgac chantīṁ taḍit rūpām praticakraṁ kramāt kramam |
ūrdhvaṁ muṣṭitrayaṁ yāvat tāvad ante mahodayaḥ || 29 ||

ud-gachchhanteem tadit-roopam prati-chakram-kramaat-kramam
oordhvam mushti-trayam yaavat taavad ante mahaa-udayah

Trace the river of life that flows through you,
   The luxuriously rising energies,
Gradually touching each of the centers
Along the spine.
Savor every shimmer of color along the way.

Enter each area tenderly,
Loving as you go,
Finally, gently,
Dissolving in the crown of the head.

Then above,
In the space above the head,
The great dawn.



7

क्रमद्वादशकं सम्यग् द्वादशाक्षरभेदितम् ।
स्थूलसूक्ष्मपरस्थित्या मुक्त्वा मुक्त्वान्ततः शिवः ॥३०॥

krama dvādaśakaṁ samyag dvādaśākṣara bheditam |
sthūla sūkṣma parasthityā muktvā muktvāntataḥ śivaḥ || 30 ||

kramah dvaa-dashakam samyak dvaa-dasha-akshara-bheditam
sthoola-sookshma-para-sthityaa muktva-amuktvaa-antatah shivah

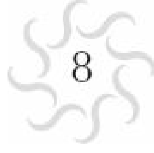
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Let your attention glide
Through the centers of awareness along the spine
With adoring intent.

There is a song to each area of the body.
Resonating in sweet vortices,
Long rhythmic vowels and hums,
Ah . . . and *. . . eee . . . ommmm . . . hummmm . . .*
Resounding on and on.

Find the harmonies
Emanating from the circulation of life energies.

Listen to these as sounds,
Then more subtly, as an underlying hum.
Eventually as most subtle feeling.
Then diving more deeply,
Dissolve into freedom.



तयापूर्याशु मूर्धान्तं भङ्क्त्वा भ्रूक्षेपसेतुना ।
निर्विकल्पं मनः कृत्वा सर्वोर्ध्वे सर्वगोद्गमः ॥३१॥

tayā pūryāśu mūrdhāntaṁ bhaṅktvā bhrū kṣepa setunā |
nirvikalpaṁ manaḥ kṛtvā sarvordhve sarvagodgamaḥ || 31 ||

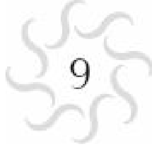
tayaa pooryaashu moordha-antam bhanktvaa broo-kshepa-setunaa
nir-vi-kalpam-manas kritvaa sarva-oordhve sarva-gah ud-gamah

Rest the attention easily in the forehead,
In the eye that is made of light.
Cherish the delicate energies glowing there.

Allow attention to inquire upwards, into the
Radiant space above the head.

The small self enters delicious omnipresence.
This it remembers and knows as its truth.

Gradually the luminosity of that truth
Fills the body to overflowing
As it rises through the crown of the head
Into a shower of light.



शिखिपक्षैश् चित्ररूपैर् मण्डलैः शून्यपञ्चकम् ।
ध्यायतोऽनुत्तरे शून्ये प्रवेशो हृदये भवेत् ॥३२॥

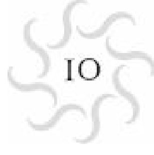
śikhi pakṣaiś citra rūpair maṇḍalaiḥ śūnya pañcakam |
dhyāyato'nuttare śūnye praveśo hṛdaye bhavet || 32 ||

shikhi-pakshaih chitra-roopaih mandalaih shoonya-panchakam
dhyaayatah an-uttare shoonye pra-veshah hridaye bhavet

The senses declare an outrageous world—
Sounds and scents, ravishing colors and shapes,
Ever-changing skies, iridescent reflections—
All these beautiful surfaces
Decorating vibrant emptiness.
The god of love is courting you,
Light as a feather.

Every perception is an invitation into revelation.
Hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting, touching—
Ways of knowing creation,
Transmissions of electric realization.
The deepest reality is always right here.

Encircled by splendor, in the center of the sphere,
Meditate where the body thrills
To currents of intimate communion.
Follow your senses to the end and beyond
Into the heart of space.



ईदृशेन क्रमेणैव यत्र कुत्रापि चिन्तना ।
शून्ये कुड्ये परे पात्रे स्वयं लीना वरप्रदा ॥३३॥

īdṛśena krameṇaiva yatra kutrāpi cintanā |
śūnye kuḍye pare pātre svayaṁ līnā vara pradā || 33 ||

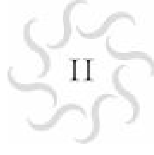
eedrishena kramena eva yatra kutra api chintanaa
shoonye kudye pare paatre svayam-leenaa vara-pradaa

The journey begins here,
With whatever is capturing your attention.

Are you gazing at the patterns on some wall?
Are you daydreaming about a celebrity?

Is there someone you love and long to cling to,
Disappear into, a soul who is a chalice for
Beauty to pour into the world?

Whatever your focus,
Give your whole being.
Gradually, step by step,
The infinity from which you both have emerged
Will encompass you with blessing.



कपालान्तर् मनो न्यस्य तिष्ठन् मीलितलोचनः ।
क्रमेण मनसो दार्ढ्यात्लक्षयेत्लक्ष्यम् उत्तमम् ॥३४॥

kapālāntar mano nyasya tiṣṭhan mīlita locanaḥ |
krameṇa manaso dārḍhyāt lakṣayet laṣyam uttamam || 34 ||

kapaala-antah manas nyasya tishthat meelita-lochanah
kramena manasah daardhyaat lakshayet lakshyam uttamam

Inside the skull there is a place
Where the essences of creation play and mingle—
  The ecstatic light of awareness
  And the awareness of that light.

The divine feminine and masculine
Sport with one another in that place.
The light of their love-play illumines all space.

Rest in that light
Ever present, and gradually
Awaken into the steady joy of
That which is always everywhere.



मध्यनाडी मध्यसंस्था बिससूत्राभरूपया ।
ध्यातान्तर्व्योमया देव्या तया देवः प्रकाशते ॥३५॥

madhya nāḍī madhya saṁsthā bisa sūtrābha rūpayā |
dhyātāntar vyoma yā devyā tayā devaḥ prakāśate || 35 ||

madhya-naadee madhya-samsthaa bisa-sootrabha-roopayaa
dhyaataa antar-vyomayaa devyaa tayaa devah pra-kaashate

There is a current of love-energy that flows
Between Earth below and Sun above.

The central channel of your spine is the riverbed.
The streaming is as delicate and powerful
As the tingling touch of lovers.

Entering here,
Radiance arches between above and below.

Your whole attention resting in the subtle,
Vibrating in the center of the spinal column,
Tracing this current between Earth and Sun,
Become magnetism relating all the worlds.



कररुद्धदृगस्त्रेण भ्रूभेदाद् द्वाररोधनात् ।
दृष्टे बिन्दौ क्रमाल् लीने तन्मध्ये परमा स्थितिः ॥३६॥

kara ruddha dṛg astreṇa bhrū bhedād dvāra rodhanāt |
dṛṣṭe bindau kramāl līne tan madhye paramā sthitiḥ || 36 ||

kara-ruddha-drish-astrena broo-bhedaad dvaara-rodhanaat
dirshte bindau kramaat leene tad-madhye paramaa-sthitih

Lift your hands, and with a gesture,
Turn aside all the forces of the outer world.
Attend to the vibrancy within.

Let the fingers lightly touch and bless
Eyes, ears, nostrils, mouth,
All the entrances to the head.
Invite attention to be within the skin, and
Cherish the quiet shimmer of vital energies.

When you notice an inner gateway,
Enter with love, as one coming home.

As the surge of light-substance rises
Follow it up into the space between the eyebrows,
Where it breaks out as an orgasm of light.



धामान्तःक्षोभसम्भूतसूक्ष्माग्नितिलकाकृतिम् ।
बिन्दुं शिखान्ते हृदये लयान्ते ध्यायतो लयः ॥३७॥

dhāmāntaḥ kṣobha sambhūta sūkṣmāgni tilakākṛtim |
binduṁ śikhānte hṛdaye layānte dhyāyato layaḥ || 37 ||

daaman-antah kshobha-sam-bhootah sookshma-agnih tilaka-akritim
bindum shikhaante hridaye layaante dhyaayatah layah

When you close your eyes,
Attention turns toward the inner glow.
The heart sees by its own light,
Pulsing with subtle flame.

In your forehead is a single eye.
Here streams of living electricity
Flow together.
The body of substance
And the body of light fuse into one.
Above your head a star is shining—
The soul, luminous in its own realm.

Life arises from itself
In a swirling motion of flame.
Being becomes body.
In meditation, adore the subtle fire—
In heart, head, and above.
Dissolve into radiance.



अनाहते पात्रकर्णेऽभग्नशब्दे सरिद्द्रुते ।
शब्दब्रह्मणि निष्णातः परम् ब्रह्माधिगच्चति ॥३८॥

anāhate pātra karṇe'bhagna śabde sarid drute |
śabda brahmaṇi niṣṇātaḥ param brahmādhigaccati || 38 ||

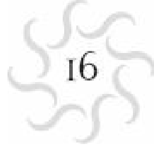
an-aahate paatra-karne a-bhagna-shabde sarit–drute
shabha-brahmani nish-naatah param-brahma adhi-gachchhati

Bathe deeply in that ocean of sound
Vibrating within you, now as always,
Resonating softly,
Permeating the space of the heart.

The ear that is tuned by rapt listening
Learns to hear the song of creation.

First like a hand bell,
Then subtler, like a flute,
Subtler still as a stringed instrument,
Eventually as the buzz of a bee.

Entering this current of sound,
The Listening One
Forgets the external world, becomes
Absorbed into internal sound,
Then absorbed in vastness,
Like the song of the stars as they shine.



प्रणवादिसमुच्चारात्प्लुतान्ते शून्यभावानात् ।
शून्यया परया शक्त्या शून्यताम् एति भैरवि ॥३९॥

praṇavādi samuccārāt plutānte śūnya bhāvānāt |
śūnyayā parayā śaktyā śūnyatām eti bhairavi || 39 ||

pra-nava aadi-sam-ud-chaaraat plutaante shoonya–bhaavanaat
shoonyayaa parayaa shaktyaa shoonyataam eti bhairavi

The roar of joy that set the worlds in motion
Is reverberating in your body
And the space between all bodies.
Beloved, listen.

Find that exuberant vibration
Rising new in every moment,
Humming in your secret places,
Resounding through the channels of delight.
Know you are flooded by it always.

Float with the sound.
Melt with it into divine silence.
The sacred power of space will carry you
Into the dancing radiant emptiness
That is the source of all.
The ocean of sound is inviting you
Into its spacious embrace,
Calling you home.



यस्य कस्यापि वर्णस्य पूर्वान्ताव् अनुभावयेत् ।
शून्यया शून्यभूतोऽसौ शून्याकारः पुमान् भवेत् ॥४०॥

yasya kasyāpi varṇasya pūrvāntāv anubhāvayet |
śūnyayā śūnya bhūto'sau śūnyākāraḥ pumān bhavet || 40 ||

yasya kasya api varnasya poorva-antau anu-bhaavayet
shoonyayaa shoonya-bhootah asau shoonya-aakaarah pumaan bhavet

---

Think of any vowel—they are all delicious.
Savor the sound with infinite gentleness.
Attend to where it comes from within you
And where it goes to when it fades away.

Listen to the subtle, ever-changing tones,
Layer upon layer.
Discover what gradualness is.
The power of sound will lead you
Into the power of silence.

Syllables are born from space,
Resonate in space, then melt into spaciousness.
Know this silent spaciousness as your Self.



तन्त्र्यादिवाद्यशब्देषु दीर्घेषु क्रमसंस्थितेः ।
अनन्यचेताः प्रत्यन्ते परव्योमवपुर् भवेत् ॥४१॥

tantry ādi vādya śabdeṣu dīrgheṣu krama saṁsthiteḥ |
ananya cetāḥ pratyante para vyoma vapur bhavet || 41 ||

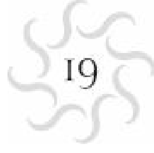
tantri aadi vaadya-shabdeshu deergheshu krama-sam-sthiteh
ananya–chetaah prati-ante para–vyoma vapuh bhavet

Immerse yourself in the rapture of music.
You know what you love. Go *there.*

Tend to each note, each chord,
Rising up from silence and dissolving again.

Vibrating strings draw us
Into the spacious resonance of the heart.

The body becomes light as the sky
And you, one with the Great Musician,
Who is even now singing us
Into existence.



पिण्डमन्त्रस्य सर्वस्य स्थूलवर्णक्रमेण तु ।
अर्धेन्दुबिन्दुनादान्तः शून्योच्चाराद् भवेच्छिवः ॥४२॥

piṇḍa mantrasya sarvasya sthūla varṇa krameṇa tu |
ardhendu bindu nādāntaḥ śūnyoccārād bhavec chivaḥ || 42 ||

pinda-mantrasya sarvasya sthoola-varna-kramena tu
ardha-indu-bindu-naada-antah shoonyah ud-chaaraat bhavet shivah

---

Bodies feed on sound.
Sonic waves on inner waters
Nourish every nerve.
Vibration strengthens bones.
Ecstatic undulation awaits you.

Take a bite of crunchy *K*, slippery *S*, a rugged *Rrrr.*
Enjoy a yummy vowel—*ah, ee, oo,* or *uu.*
Throw it in a bowl of *Mmmm.*

Treasure the impact on your tongue—
Kreem, Shreem, Raam, Yumm, Hreem, Laam.
Pronounce a sound out loud, then whisper softly.
Now hear with your inner ear.
Allow the resonance to enchant you within.
The sound goes on resounding, continuing of itself.
As the hum dissolves into silence,
Be nurtured
In the tenderness of infinite space.



निजदेहे सर्वदिक्कं युगपद् भावयेद् वियत् ।
निर्विकल्पमनास् तस्य वियत्सर्वम् प्रवर्तते ॥४३॥

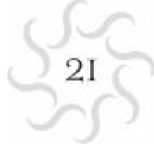
nija dehe sarva dikkaṁ yugapad bhāvayed viyat |
nirvikalpa manās tasya viyat sarvam pravartate || 43 ||

ni-ja-dehe sarva-dikkam yuga-pad bhaavayet viyat
nir-vi-kalpa-manaah tasya viyat sarvam pra-vartate

The radiance of space permeates the body
And all directions simultaneously.
Space is always here,
Already here before your noticing of it.

What we call space is a presence,
Permission to exist,
And worlds within which to express.

Without thinking about it,
Without forming mental images,
Rest in this vast expanse,
Friends with infinity.



पृष्टशून्यं मूलशून्यं युगपद् भावयेच् च यः ।
शरीरनिरपेक्षिण्या शक्त्या शून्यमना भवेत् ॥४४॥

pṛṣṭa śūnyaṁ mūla śūnyaṁ yugapad bhāvayec ca yaḥ |
śarīra nirapekṣiṇyā śaktyā śūnya manā bhavet || 44 ||

prishtha-shoonyam moola-shoonyam yuga-pad bhaavayet cha yah
shareera nir-a-pekshinyaa shaktyaa shoonya–manaa bhavet

Your back is a gateway to the sky.
The celestial dance,
The story of space and time,
Is coded in the spine.

Attend simultaneously
To the area around your tailbone,
Vibrating with luminous space,
And to the spine as a channel
Gushing with radiant emptiness.

Here,
Where particles flash in and out of existence,
Is the origin of mind.



पृष्टशून्यं मूलशून्यं हृच्छून्यम् भावयेत्स्थिरम् ।
युगपन् निर्विकल्पत्वान् निर्विकल्पोदयस् ततः ॥४५॥

pṛṣṭa śūnyaṁ mūla śūnyaṁ hṛc chūnyam bhāvayet sthiram |
yugapan nirvikalpa tvān nirvikalpodayas tataḥ || 45 ||

prishtha-shoonyam moola-shoonyam hrid-shoonyam bhaavayet sthiram
yuga-pat nir-vi-kalpa tvaat nir-vi-kalpah udayah tatah

Behind the spine is infinity.
Below the perineum,
Invisible pulsating roots
Open downward into space.

The heart is wide as a spiral galaxy.

Steadily consider
Back, root, heart,
And know the living body of vastness
That you are.



तनूदेशे शून्यतैव क्षणमात्रं विभावयेत् ।
निर्विकल्पं निर्विकल्पो निर्विकल्पस्वरूपभाक् ॥४६॥

tanū deśe śūnyataiva kṣaṇa mātraṁ vibhāvayet |
nirvikalpaṁ nirvikalpo nirvikalpa svarūpa bhāk || 46 ||

tanoo-deshe shoonyataa eva kshana–maatram vi-bhaavayet
nir-vi-kalpam nir-vi-kalpah nir-vi-kalpa sva-roopa–bhaaj

Forget all of your ideas about the body—
It's this way or it's that way.

Just be with any area of it,
This present body,
As permeated with limitless space,
Drenched in freedom.



सर्वं देहगतं द्रव्यं वियद्व्याप्तं मृगेक्षणे ।
विभावयेत्ततस् तस्य भावना सा स्थिरा भवेत् ॥४७॥

sarvaṁ deha gataṁ dravyaṁ viyad vyāptaṁ mṛgekṣaṇe |
vibhāvayet tatas tasya bhāvanā sā sthirā bhavet || 47 ||

sarvam deha-gatam dravyam viyat-vi-aaptam mriga-eekshane
vi-bhaavayet tatas tasya bhaavanaa saa sthiraa bhavet

This body is made of earth and gold,
Sky and stars, rivers and oceans,
Masquerading as muscle and bone.
Every substance is here:
Diamonds and silver, magical elixirs,
Ambrosia that gives visions,
Herbs that nourish and heal.
The foundation of the planet,
Immortal magnetic iron,
Circulating in the blood.

Every element in you loves the others:
Earth loves rain, sky loves sun,
Sun loves the space it shines through,
Space loves everyone equally.

In meditation, luxuriate in knowing this deep and simple truth.
Every cell is an organ of sense
Infused with majesty.



देहान्तरे त्वग्विभागम् भित्तिभूतं विचिन्तयेत् ।
न किञ्चिदन्तरे तस्य ध्यायन्ध्येयभाग् भवेत् ॥४८॥

dehāntare tvag vibhāgam bhitti bhūtaṁ vicintayet |
na kiñcid antare tasya dhyāyan na dhyeya bhāg bhavet || 48 ||

deha-antare tvak-vi-bhaagam bhitti-bhootam vi-chintayet
na kinchit antare tasya dhyaayam na dhyeya bhaaj bhavet

Attend to the skin
As a subtle boundary
Containing vastness.

Enter that pulsing immensity.
Discover that you are not separate
From anything there.

There is no inside,
There is no outside,
There is no other—
No object to meditate upon that is not you.



हृद्याकाशे निलीनाक्षः पद्मसम्पुटमध्यगः ।
अनन्यचेताः सुभगे परं सौभाग्यमाप्नुयात् ॥४९॥

hṛdyākāśe nilīnākṣaḥ padma sampuṭa madhya gaḥ |
ananya cetāḥ subhage paraṁ saubhāgyam āpnuyāt || 49 ||

hridya–aakaashe nileena–akshah padma–sam–puta–madhya-gah
an-anya–chetaah su-bhage param sau-bhaagyam aapnuyaat

The One Who Is at Play Everywhere says,

There is a space in the heart where everything meets.
Come here if you want to find me.
Mind, senses, soul, eternity—all are here.
Are you here?

Enter the bowl of vastness that is the heart.
Listen to the song that is always resonating.
Give yourself to it with total abandon.
Quiet ecstasy is here,
And a steady, regal sense
Of resting in a perfect spot.
You who are the embodiment of blessing,
Once you know the way,
The nature of attention will call you to return.
Again and again, answer that call,
And be saturated with knowing,
"I belong here, I am at home."



सर्वतः स्वशरीरस्य द्वादशान्ते मनोलयात् ।
दृढबुद्धेर् दृढीभूतं तत्त्वलक्ष्यम् प्रवर्तते ॥५०॥

sarvataḥ svaśarīrasya dvādaśānte manolayāt |
dṛḍha buddher dṛḍhī bhūtaṁ tattva lakṣyam pravartate || 50 ||

sarvatah sva-shareerasya dvaa-dasha-ante mano-layaat
dridha-buddheh dridhee-bhootam tattva-lakshyam pra-vartate

Put attention into the luminous connections
Between the centers of the body,
Where the mind loves to dissolve.

Base of the spine and top of the head.
Genitals and heart.
Heart and throat.
Throat and forehead.
Forehead and crown of the skull.

Enter that glowing net of light
With a focus born of awe,
And even your bones will know enlightenment.



यथा तथा यत्र तत्र द्वादशान्ते मनः क्षिपेत् ।
प्रतिक्षणं क्षीणवृत्तेर् वैलक्षण्यं दिनैर् भवेत् ॥५१॥

yathā tathā yatra tatra dvādaśānte manaḥ kṣipet |
prati kṣaṇaṁ kṣīṇa vṛtter vailakṣaṇyaṁ dinair bhavet || 51 ||

yathaa-tathaa yatra-tatra dvaada-shaante manah kshipet
prati-kshanam ksheena-vritteh vai-lakshanyam dinaih bhavet

This body is sustained by altars
To the radiant nectar of life—
Around you, an ocean of air
Ready to become your breath.
Above the head, the glow of an invisible sun.
Within the spaciousness of the heart,
A pulsing throb of creation,
Where the breaths meet, fuse,
And transform into each other.

Whenever, wherever your mind wanders,
Whatever you wonder,
Return to the luminous.
Choose any altar—
Throw your attention again and again
Into one of these centers where spirit and flesh
Consummate their love.
Day by day, old whirlpools fade, the endless circles.
You are living in the temple of essence.



कालाग्निना कालपदाद् उत्थितेन स्वकम् पुरम् ।
प्लुष्टम् विचिन्तयेद् अन्ते शान्ताभासस् तदा भवेत् ॥५२॥

kālāgninā kāla padād utthitena svakam puram |
pluṣṭam vicintayed ante śāntābhāsas tadā bhavet || 52 ||

kaala-agninaa kaala-padaat ud-thitena svakam puram
plushtam vi-chintayet ante shaanta-aa-bhaasah tadaa bhavet

Live for a few days in the meditation,
"I am immersed in the flame—
The flame of time,
The flame of love,
The flame of life.
The universal fire flows through me."

Step into that fire wholeheartedly,
Starting with the big toe,
Then surrendering everywhere.
Only the not-self,
Which doesn't exist anyway,
Burns away.

Attend to this continually,
And awaken into tranquility.
Your essence is renewed in the flame,
For it *is* flame and knows itself as flame
Since the first heartbeat of creation.



एवम् एव जगत्सर्वं दग्धं ध्यात्वा विकल्पतः ।
अनन्यचेतसः पुंसः पुम्भावः परमो भवेत् ॥५३॥

evam eva jagat sarvaṁ dagdhaṁ dhyātvā vikalpataḥ |
ananya cetasaḥ puṁsaḥ pumbhāvaḥ paramo bhavet || 53 ||

evam eva jagat sarvam dagdham dhyaatvaa vi-kalpatah
an-anya-chetasah pumsah pum-bhaavah paramah bhavet

Imagine the entire world consumed by flame.
Stay steady, do not waver,
As fire transmutes form into light.
The soul reveals itself
To itself as Radiance.



स्वदेहे जगतो वापि सूक्ष्मसूक्ष्मतराणि च ।
तत्त्वानि यानि निलयं ध्यात्वान्ते व्यज्यते परा ॥५४॥

svadehe jagato vāpi sūkṣma sūkṣmatarāṇi ca |
tattvāni yāni nilayaṁ dhyātvānte vyajyate parā || 54 ||

sva-dehe jagatah vaa api sookshma–sookshma-taraani cha
tattvaani yaani ni-layam dhyaatva–ante vi-ajyate paraa

Experience the substance of the body
And the world
As made up of vibrating particles,
And these particles made up of
Even finer energies.
Drifting more deeply,
Feel into each pulse of energy
As it condenses from infinity
And dissolves back into it
Continuously.

Noticing this, breathe easily
With infinity dancing everywhere.



पिनां च दुर्बलां शक्तिं ध्यात्वा द्वादशगोचरे ।
प्रविश्य हृदये ध्यायन् मुक्तः स्वातन्त्र्यमाप्नुयात् ॥५५॥

pīnāṁ ca durbalāṁ śaktiṁ dhyātvā dvādaśa gocare |
praviśya hṛdaye dhyāyan muktaḥ svātantryam āpnuyāt || 55 ||

peenam cha dur-balaam shaktim dhyaatvaa dvaa-dasha-gochare
pra-vishya hridaye dhyaayam muktah svaa-tantryam aapnuyaat

Strong or soft, wild or serene—
Wherever breath flows there is song.
Hear its whisper touching behind the face,
Singing in the throat,
Dancing spirals in the sanctuary of your heart.

In this practice of listening,
A moment may come when you just want to lie down.
This is a doorway—surrender.
Fall into the wide-open embrace of life.
You are the instrument breath is playing.

All the meditations you have ever loved
Are vibrating in this luxurious hum,
Continuing even in sleep and dreams.
This is your school. Just you and infinity.
The texture of the Self is untamed freedom.



भुवनाध्वादिरूपेण चिन्तयेत्क्रमशोऽखिलम् ।
स्थूलसूक्ष्मपरस्थित्या यावद् अन्ते मनोलयः ॥५६॥

bhuvanādhvādi rūpeṇa cintayet kramaśo'khilam |
sthūla sūkṣma parasthityā yāvad ante manolayaḥ || 56 ||

bhuvana adhva aadi roopena chintayet kramashah a-khilam
stoola-sookshma-para-sthityaa yaavat ante manas-layah

This whole universe is a path of liberation,
A vast arena for your endless play.

Playing, let your awareness be everywhere at once.
Planets, stars, swirling galaxies, subatomic motes—
All are dancing within you.

Enter the rhythm,
Descend into the space between beats.
Dissolve into intimacy with the Dancing One.



अस्य सर्वस्य विश्वस्य पर्यन्तेषु समन्ततः ।
अध्वप्रक्रियया तत्त्वं शैवं ध्यत्वा महोदयः ॥५७॥

asya sarvasya viśvasya pary anteṣu samantataḥ |
adhva prakriyayā tattvaṁ śaivaṁ dhyatvā mahodayaḥ || 57 ||

asya sarvasya vishvasya pari-anteshu sam-antatah
adhva pra-kriyayaa tattvam shaivam dhyaatvaa maha–udayah

The air I am breathing was exhaled in ecstasy
By an ancient sun.
This earth I am standing on
Was born of cosmic fire.
The blood flowing through my veins
Is as salty as the primordial ocean.
The space permeating my body
Is infinite as the space all around.

Above, below, to all sides, within,
The elements of the universe
Are engaged in their ceremony of delight.

This is my religion.
The attraction between suns
Is the same
As the love pulsating in my heart.



विश्वम् एतन् महादेवि शून्यभूतं विचिन्तयेत् ।
तत्रैव च मनो लीनं ततस् तल्लयभाजनम् ॥५८॥

viśvam etan mahā devi śūnya bhūtaṁ vicintayet |
tatraiva ca mano līnaṁ tatas tal laya bhājanam || 58 ||

vishvam etan mahaa-devi shoonya-bhootam vi-chintayet
tatra eva cha manah leenam tatah tat laya bhaajanam

Shining One,

Breathing out, let go
And fall into knowing all of creation
As existing within space,
And you are absorbed in that
Vibrant empty fullness.
In this moment your body is intimate
With space, exchanging essence for essence.

Balancing in the midst of vast emptiness,
Know utter freedom.



घतादिभाजने दृष्टिम् भित्तिस् त्यक्त्वा विनिक्षिपेत् ।
तल्लयं तत्क्षणाद् गत्वा तल्लयात्तन्मयो भवेत् ॥५९॥

ghatādi bhājane dṛṣṭim bhittis tyaktvā vinikṣipet |
tal layaṁ tat kṣaṇād gatvā tal layāt tan mayo bhavet || 59 ||

ghata aadi bhaajane drishtim bhittih tyaktvaa vi-ni-kshipet
tat-layam tat-kshanaat gatvaa tat-layaat tat-mayah bhavet

Space is worthy of worship and wonder.
It is the field within which every thing exists.
Rest your eyes in emptiness,
Inside a room, a temple, even a little jar—
Any contained space.

Throw the one who is seeing into the center.
Entrust your mind to the embrace of space.
In a flash, all boundaries dissolve.



निर्वृक्षगिरिभित्त्यादिदेशे दृष्टिं विनिक्षिपेत् ।
विलीने मानसे भावे वृत्तिक्षिणः प्रजायते ॥६०॥

nirvṛkṣa giri bhitty ādi deśe dṛṣṭiṁ vinikṣipet |
vilīne mānase bhāve vṛtti kṣiṇaḥ prajāyate || 60 ||

nir-vriksha-giri-bhitti aadi deshe drishtim vi-ni-kshipet
vi-leene manase bhaave vritti-ksheenah pra-jaayate

Go to a wide-open space,
Gaze without looking anywhere.

The mind stops its building of thoughts,
And rests on its own foundation—
Immensity.

The light that you see by
Is the light that comes from inside.



उभयोर् भावयोर् ज्ञाने ध्यात्वा मध्यं समाश्रयेत् ।
युगपच् च द्वयं त्यक्त्वा मध्ये तत्त्वम् प्रकाशते ॥६१॥

ubhayor bhāvayor jñāne dhyātvā madhyaṁ samāśrayet |
yugapac ca dvayaṁ tyaktvā madhye tattvam prakāśate || 61 ||

ubhayoh bhaavayoh jnaane dhyaatvaa madhyam sam-aashrayet
yuga-pad cha dvayam tyaktvaa madhye tattvam pra-kaashate

Watch for a moment in which
Two opposing perceptions occur—
    Wanting to go and not going,
    Knowing and simultaneously not knowing.

In the midst of this dilemma,
Let go of both perceptions
And jump in to the interval between.

Reality flashes forth.
Your being is the shining field of awareness,
The continuum in which the opposites play.



भावे त्यक्ते निरुद्धा चिन् नैव भावान्तरं व्रजेत् ।
तदा तन्मध्यभावेन विकसत्यति भावना ॥६२॥

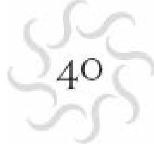
bhāve tyakte niruddhā cin naiva bhāvāntaraṁ vrajet |
tadā tan madhya bhāvena vikasatyati bhāvanā || 62 ||

bhaave tyakte ni-ruddhaa chit na eva bhaava-antaram vrajet
tadaa tat madhya bhaavena vi-kasatyati bhaavanaa

Cast aside the ten thousand things,
And love only one.
Don't go on to another.

Engage your lively awareness
With this one focus—
One object, one thought, one symbol.
Now go inside.
Find the center,
The soul, the heart.

Right here,
In the middle of the feeling,
Attend the blossoming—
Attention vast as the sky.



सर्वं देहं चिन्मयं हि जगद् वा परिभावयेत् ।
युगपन् निर्विकल्पेन मनसा परमोदयः ॥६३॥

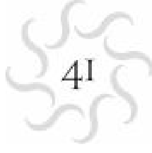
sarvaṁ dehaṁ cin mayaṁ hi jagad vā paribhāvayet |
yugapan nirvikalpena manasā paramodayaḥ || 63 ||

sarvam deham chit-mayam hi jagatvaa pari-bhaavayet
yuga-pad nir-vi-kalpena manasaa parama-udayah

Delight in this entire universe
As permeated with divine awareness,
And every area of your body—
Your feet, your face, your shoulders—
Made out of divine awareness.

The body of the planet beneath you,
Out beyond the farthest horizons,
The stars and the reaches of space—
All are arising from God-consciousness.

Know this, and dissolve into peace.



वायुद्वयस्य सङ्घट्टाद् अन्तर् वा बहिर् अन्ततः ।
योगी समत्वविज्ञानसमुद्गमनभाजनम् ॥६४॥

vāyu dvayasya saṅghaṭṭād antar vā bahir antataḥ |
yogī samatva vijñāna samudgamana bhājanam || 64 ||

vaayu dvayasya sanghattaat antar vaa bahir–antatah
yogee samatva vi-jnaana sam-ud-gamana bhaajanam

Breathing is the flow of the divine,
Where the rhythms of life turn into each other—
The eternal exchange.

Pour one breath into the other,
Outbreath into the inbreath
Into the outbreath.

Awaken to equanimity,
At peace in the play of opposites.



सर्वं जगत्स्वदेहं वा स्वानन्दभरितं स्मरेत् ।
युगपत्स्वामृतेनैव परानन्दमयो भवेत् ॥६५॥

sarvaṁ jagat svadehaṁ vā svānanda bharitaṁ smaret |
yugapat svāmṛtenaiva parānanda mayo bhavet || 65 ||

sarvam-jagat sva-deham vaa sva-aananda-bharitam smaret
yuga-pad sva-amritena eva para-aananda-mayah bhavet

With one sweep of attention,
Gather in the whole universe
And remember it
As your body of bliss.

The deep rhythms of life,
Pulsating,
Stir an ambrosia
Flowing and overflowing everywhere.

Drink the nectar
Of all-pervading joy
From the radiant cup
That is this very body.



कुहनेन प्रयोगेण सद्य एव मृगेक्षणे ।
समुदेति महानन्दो येन तत्त्वं प्रकाशते ॥६६॥

kuhanena prayogeṇa sadya eva mṛgekṣaṇe |
samudeti mahānando yena tattvaṁ prakāśate || 66 ||

kuhanena pra-yogena sadya eva mriga-eekshane
sam-udeti mahaa-aanandah yena tattvam pra-kaashate

You Whose Existence Melts Me,

Whenever you dissolve into helpless laughter—
Transported by a magic show,
Antics or jokes,
Having your armpits tickled,
Drenched by a sudden shower,
Or any of Nature's tricks—

Dive into the *source* of that laughter.
Surrender to the surge of joy
Illuminating the essence of reality.



सर्वस्रोतोनिबन्धेन प्राणशक्त्योर्ध्वया शनैः ।
पिपीलस्पर्शवेलायाम् प्रथते परमं सुखम् ॥६७॥

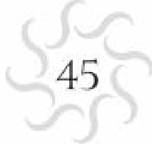
sarva sroto nibandhena prāṇa śaktyordhvayā śanaiḥ |
pipīla sparśa velāyām prathate paramaṁ sukham || 67 ||

sarva srotah ni-bandhana praana-shakti-oordhvayaa shanaih
pipeela-sparsha-velaayaam prathate paramam sukham

Rivers of power flowing everywhere.
Fields of magnetism relating everything.
This is your origin. This is your lineage.

The current of creation is right here,
Coursing through subtle channels,
Animating this very form.
Follow the gentle touch of life,
Soft as the footprint of an ant,
As tiny sensations open to vastness.

Power sings as it flows,
Electrifies the organs of sensing,
Becomes liquid light,
Nourishes your entire being.
Celebrate the boundary
Where streams join the sea,
Where body meets infinity.



वह्नेर् विषस्य मध्ये तु चित्तं सुखमयं क्षिपेत् ।
केवलं वायुपूर्णं वा स्मरानन्देन युज्यते ॥६८॥

vahner viṣasya madhye tu cittaṁ sukha mayaṁ kṣipet |
kevalaṁ vāyu pūrṇaṁ vā smarānandena yujyate || 68 ||

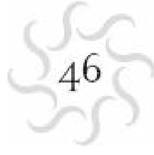
vahneh vishasya madhye tu chittam-sukha-mayam kshipet
kevalam vaayu-poornam vaa smara-aanandena yujyate

As the fires build in sexual joy,
Enter that blessed place between the legs,
Embrace the holy energies shimmering there.

Follow the rising flow,
Undulating throughout the spine,
Shivering with pleasure.

As the fire intensifies
And flashes upwards,
Suspend the breath for a moment.
Throw your whole self in.

Become brilliance in your bodily form,
In union with primordial bliss.



शक्तिसङ्गमसङ्क्षुब्धशक्त्यावेशावसानिकम् ।
यत्सुखम् ब्रह्मतत्त्वस्य तत्सुखं स्वाक्यम् उच्यते ॥६९॥

śakti saṅgama saṅkṣubdha śakty āveśāvasānikam |
yat sukham brahma tattvasya tat sukhaṁ svākyam ucyate || 69 ||

shakti-sangama sam-kshubdha shakti-aa-vesha ava-saanikam
yat sukham brahma tattvasya tat sukham svaakyam uchyate

At the moment of orgasm
The truth is illumined—
The one everyone longs for.

Lovemaking is riding the currents of excitation
Into revelation.
Two rivers flow together,
The body becomes *quivering*.

No inside and no outside—
Only the delight of union.
The mind releases itself into divine energy,
And the body knows where it came from.

This is reality, and it is always here.
Everyone craves the source,
And it is always everywhere.



लेहनामन्थनाकोटैः स्त्रीसुखस्य भरात्स्मृतेः ।
शक्त्यभावेऽपि देवेशि भवेद् आनन्दसम्प्लवः ॥७०॥

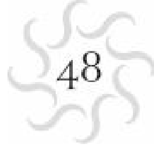
lehanā manthanākoṭaiḥ strī sukhasya bharāt smṛteḥ |
śakty abhāve'pi deveśi bhaved ānanda samplavaḥ || 70 ||

lehanaa manthanaa aa-kotaih stree-sukhasya bharaat smriteh
shakti-a-bhaave api deveshi bhavet aananda-sam-plavah

When by oneself, flooded with delight,
Simply in the memory of that kiss . . .
Here is the inner ritual.

That lick, that taste of nectar,
That caress, embrace, particular pressure . . .
Your subtle body replays the dance,
Inundated by divine sensations.
Melting, merging, swelling . . .

Surrender to the deluge.
Know it as your own.
This ocean of bliss is you.



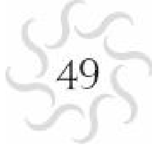
आनन्दे महति प्राप्ते दृष्टे वा बान्धवे चिरात् ।
आनन्दम् उद्गतं ध्यात्वा तल्लयस् तन्मना भवेत् ॥७१॥

ānande mahati prāpte dṛṣṭe vā bāndhave cirāt |
ānandam udgataṁ dhyātvā tal layas tan manā bhavet || 71 ||

aanande mahati praapte drishte vaa baandhave chiraat
aanandam ud-gatam dhyaatvaa tat–layah tat–manaa bhavet

In the great joy of seeing
A loved one after a long absence,
A flash of recognition ignites you.
Space becomes charged,
The bond between you shimmers,
And a surge of delight arises in your being.

Beloved,
Find within you the source of this surge.
Melt into that place of upwelling,
A wave rolling in a vast ocean of delight.



जग्धिपानकृतोल्लासरसानन्दविजृम्भणात् ।
भावयेद् भरितावस्थां महानन्दस् ततो भवेत् ॥७२॥

jagdhi pāna kṛtollāsa rasānanda vijṛmbhaṇāt |
bhāvayed bharitāvasthāṁ mahānandas tato bhavet || 72 ||

jagdhi-paana krita-ullaasa rasa-aananda vi-jrimbhanaat
bhaavayet bharitaa-ava-sthaam mahaa-aanandah tatah bhavet

Tasting dark chocolate,
A ripe apricot,
A luscious elixir—
Savor the expanding joy in your body.
Nature is offering herself to you.
How astonishing
To realize this world can taste so good.

When sipping some ambrosia,
Raise your glass,
Close your eyes,
Toast the universe.
The Sun and Moon and Earth
Danced together
To bring you this delight.
Receive the nectar on your tongue
As a kiss of the divine.



गितादिविषयास्वादासमसौख्यैकतात्मनः ।
योगिनस् तन्मयत्वेन मनोरूढेस् तदात्मता ॥७३॥

gitādi viṣayāsvādā sama saukhyaikatāt manaḥ |
yoginas tan mayatvena mano rūḍhes tad ātmatā || 73 ||

geetaa aadi vishaya-aasvaadaa sama-saukhya eka-tat-manah
yoginah tat-mayatvena manas-roodheh tat-aatmataa

All around you, in every moment,
The world is offering a feast for your senses.
Songs are playing,
Tasty food is on the table,
Fragrances are in the air,
Colors fill the eyes with light.

You who long for union,
Attend this banquet with loving focus.
The outer and inner worlds
Open to each other.
Oneness of vision, oneness of heart.

Right here, in the midst of it all,
Mount that elation, ascend with it,
Become identical
With the ecstatic essence
Embracing both worlds.



यत्र यत्र मनस् तुष्टिर् मनस् तत्रैव धारयेत् ।
तत्र तत्र परानन्दस्वारूपं सम्प्रवर्तते ॥७४॥

yatra yatra manas tuṣṭir manas tatraiva dhārayet |
tatra tatra parānanda svārūpaṁ sampravartate || 74 ||

yatra-yatra manas-tushtih manas tatra eva dhaarayet
tatra-tatra paraa-aananda sva-roopam sam-pra-vartate

Wherever, whenever you feel carried away,
Rejoicing in every breath,
There, there is your meditation hall.

Cherish these times of absorption—
Rocking the baby in the silence of the night,
Pouring water into a crystal glass,
Tending the logs in a crackling fire,
Sharing a meal with a circle of friends.
Embrace these pleasures and know,
"This is my true body."

Nowhere is more holy than this.
Right here is the sacred pilgrimage.
Live in alertness for such a moment, my Beloved,
As if it were your one meeting with the Creator.



अनागतायां निद्रायाम् प्रणष्टे बाह्यगोचरे ।
सावस्था मनसा गम्या परा देवी प्रकाशते ॥७५॥

anāgatāyāṁ nidrāyām praṇaṣṭe bāhya gocare |
sāvasthā manasā gamyā parā devī prakāśate || 75 ||

an-aa-gataayaam nidraayam pra-nashte baahya–gochare
saa ava-sthaa manasaa gamyaa paraa–devee pra-kaashate

When sleep has not yet come,
And the sweet buzz of exhaustion
Permeates the body,
Linger in the *ahhhh* of relief
As your head touches the pillow.

Everything in you is yearning to let go.
So let go, let your body fall
Into something deeper than sleep.
With your mind, enter
The soft luminous glow of the soul.



तेजसा सूर्यदीपादेर् आकाशे शबलीकृते ।
दृष्टिर् निवेश्या तत्रैव स्वात्मरूपम् प्रकाशते ॥७६॥

tejasā sūrya dīpāder ākāśe śabalī kṛte |
dṛṣṭir niveśyā tatraiva svātma rūpam prakāśate || 76 ||

tejasaa-soorya-deepaadeh aakaashe shabalee-krite
drishtih-ni-veshyaa tatra eva sva-aatma-roopam pra-kaashate

Gaze out at space,
Aware of multicolored luminosity
Permeating everywhere . . .

The blue sky, filled with rays from the sun.
The night sky, dark, yet crisscrossed by
The light of a billion stars.
How can this be?

All space is the same,
Inside you and far away.
Lose yourself in spaciousness,
Come home to your true Self.



करङ्किण्या क्रोधनया भैरव्या लेलिहानया ।
खेचर्या दृष्टिकाले च परावाप्तिः प्रकाशते ॥७७॥

karaṅkiṇyā krodhanayā bhairavyā lelihānayā |
khecaryā dṛṣṭi kāle ca parāvāptiḥ prakāśate || 77 ||

karankinyaa krodhanayaa bhairavyaa leli-haanayaa
kecharyaa drishti-kaale cha paraa-ava-aaptih pra-kaashate

You who have been seeking, whatever path you are on,
A moment will come when
Divine pulsation grabs you
And carries you into its dance.
In the midst of ecstatic motion,
Your body dissolves into light, leaving only
The softly glowing benediction of the bones.
You become the face of fury, yet serene within.
Eyes fly open in amazement,
Seeing the unseen vastness.
Or you become a tongue tasting upward
Into the nectar of eternity.

The soul reveals itself to itself
Through movement,
Energy-infused undulations and gestures
Of hand, foot, spine, face, and form.
The invisible loves the visible.



मृद्वासने स्फिजैकेन हस्तपादौ निराश्रयम् ।
निधाय तत्प्रसङ्गेण परा पूर्णा मतिर् भवेत् ॥७८॥

mṛdvāsane sphijaikena hastapādau nirāśrayam |
nidhāya tat prasaṅgeṇa parā pūrṇā matir bhavet || 78 ||

mridu-aasane sphijaikena hasta-paadau nir-aashrayam
ni-dhaaya tat pra-sangena paraa-poornaa matih bhavet

Sit in any relaxed, comfortable pose.
Experience the earth below
As insubstantial, a pillow of air—
Air that is always vibrating,
Minute particles in ecstatic motion.

Poised here,
No support below, no support above,
No support for the feet or hands,
No support for the mind,
Be completely at peace!



उपविश्यासने सम्यग् बाहू कृत्वार्धकुञ्चितौ ।
कक्षव्योम्नि मनः कुर्वन् शममायाति तल्लयात् ॥७९॥

upaviśyāsane samyag bāhū kṛtvārdha kuñcitau |
kakṣa vyomni manaḥ kurvan śamam āyāti tal layāt || 79 ||

upa-vishya aasane sam-yak baahoo kritva ardha-kunchitau
kaksha-vyomni manah kurvan shamam aayaati tat-layaat

Oceans embrace a continent.
Space welcomes the sun.
Embrace yourself this generously.

Form your arms into a circle
And cherish the arising of serenity.

Attend the birth of something new.
Thoughts dissolve into peace,
As you become the One who embraces All.



स्थूलरूपस्य भावस्य स्तब्धां दृष्टिं निपात्य च ।
अचिरेण निराधारं मनः कृत्वा शिवं व्रजेत् ॥८०॥

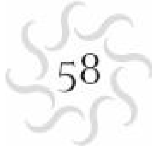
sthūla rūpasya bhāvasya stabdhāṁ dṛṣṭiṁ nipātya ca |
acireṇa nirādhāraṁ manaḥ kṛtvā śivaṁ vrajet || 80 ||

sthoola-roopasya bhaavasya stabdhaam drishtim ni-paatya cha
achirena nir-aa-dhaaram manah kritvaa shivam vrajet

Find something so enchanting to behold
That you are transfixed—ravished.
Allow yourself to be captivated.

Gaze upon its form
With the eyes of wonder.
Attend to details—
This shape, texture, these colors . . .
How can something so beautiful possibly exist?

With a steady gaze, melt into
The field of space embracing that form.
At once,
Be at one with the Creator, who is
Looking through your eyes, loving creation.



मध्यजिह्वे स्फारितास्ये मध्ये निक्षिप्य चेतनाम् ।
होच्चारं मनसा कुर्वंस् ततः शान्ते प्रलीयते ॥८१॥

madhya jihve sphāritāsye madhye nikṣipya cetanām |
hoccāraṁ manasā kurvaṁs tataḥ śānte pralīyate || 81 ||

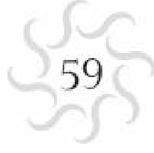
madhya jihve sphaaritaasye madhye ni-kshipya chetanaam
ho–ud-chaaram manasaa kurvan tatah shaante pra-leeyate

The tongue is made of truth and flame.
On it dance the triple fires of spirit, body, soul.

Trace this dance from the depths of your core,
Rising upward through the crown of your being.
Every offering of breath and food
Feeds this holy flame.

Touch the tip of the tongue
To the roof of the mouth, lightly.
Inquire into the luminosity above.
Breathe out with a quiet *h a a a a a.*

You are an altar to the flame of life.
Throw yourself into the throbbing intensity.
Become this dance,
Absorbed in radiant splendor.



आसने शयने स्थित्वा निराधारं विभावयन् ।
स्वदेहं मनसि क्षिणे क्षणात्क्षीणाशयो भवेत् ॥८२॥

āsane śayane sthitvā nirādhāraṁ vibhāvayan |
svadehaṁ manasi kṣiṇe kṣaṇāt kṣīṇāśayo bhavet || 82 ||

asane shayane sthitvaa nir-aa-dhaaram vi-bhaavayan
sva-deham manasi ksheene kshanaat ksheena-aa-shayah bhavet

Sitting on a soft seat,
Or lying on your mat,
Experience the space below
As offering no support.

You are simply suspended,
Floating in space.

Structures of the mind release.
The reservoir of habits dissolves.
In an instant, lifetimes of patterns
Vanish.



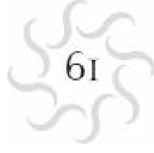
चलासने स्थितस्याथ शनैर् वा देहचालनात् ।
प्रशान्ते मानसे भावे देवि दिव्यौघमाप्नुयात् ॥८३॥

calāsane sthitas yātha śanair vā deha cālanāt |
praśānte mānase bhāve devi divyaughamāpnuyāt || 83 ||

chal-aasane sthitasya-atha shanaih vaa deha-chaalanaat
pra-shaante maanase bhaave devi divya-augham aapnuyaat

Rocking, undulating, swaying,
Carried by rhythm,
Cherish the streaming energy
Flooding your body
As a current of the divine.

Oh Radiant One,
Ride the waves of ecstatic motion
Into a sublime fusion
Of passion and peace.



आकाशं विमलम् पश्यन् कृत्वा दृष्टिं निरन्तराम् ।
स्तब्धात्मा तत्क्षणाद् देवि भैरवं वपुर् आप्नुयात् ॥८४॥

ākāśaṁ vimalam paśyan kṛtvā dṛṣṭiṁ nirantarām |
stabdhātmā tat kṣaṇād devi bhairavaṁ vapur āpnuyāt || 84 ||

aakaasham vi-malam pashyan kritvaa drishtim nir-antaraam
stabdha-aatma tat-kshanaat devi bhairavam-vapuh aapnuyaat

Adorable One,

Sit or lie down, completely immobile,
Beholding the cloudless sky—
Or if there are clouds, the sky beyond.

As vastness envelops you,
The body vanishes,
Thoughts forget to come.
In this moment,
You are the nature of the great sky.



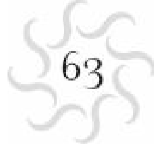
लीनं मूर्ध्नि वियत्सर्वम् भैरवत्वेन भावयेत् ।
तत्सर्वम् भैरवाकारतेजस्तत्त्वं समाविशेत् ॥८५॥

līnaṁ mūrdhni viyat sarvam bhairavatvena bhāvayet |
tat sarvam bhairavākāra tejas tattvaṁ samāviśet || 85 ||

leenam moordhni viyat sarvam bhairavatvena bhaavayet
tat sarvam bhairava–aa-kaara tejas–tattvam sam-aa-vishet

Enter the space inside your head.
See it as already infinite,
Extending forever in all directions.

This spaciousness that you are
Is permeated by luminosity.
Know this radiance
As the soul of the world.



किञ्चिज् ज्ञातं द्वैतदायि बाह्यालोकस् तमः पुन।
विश्वादि भैरवं रूपं ज्ञात्वानन्तप्रकाशभृत् ॥८६॥

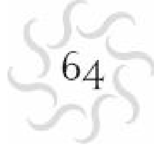
kiñcij jñātaṁ dvaitadāyi bāhyālokas tamaḥ punaḥ |
viśvādi bhairavaṁ rūpaṁ jñātvānanta prakāśabhṛt || 86 ||

kinchit jnaatam dvaitadaayi baahya-aa-lokah tamah punah
vishva aadi bhairavam-roopam jnaatvaa an-anta-pra-kaasha-bhrit

---

Dreaming, dreaming, sleeping, awakening—
Rhythms of darkness and light.
Day and night, night and day, wondering . . .
Who am I? Who AM I?
Who is morphing through this
Ever-shifting flow?

Beloved, wake up!
Dance in your true body before time,
Shimmering energy without end.



एवम् एव दुर्निशायां कृष्णपक्षागमे चिरम् ।
तैमिरम् भावयन् रूपम् भैरवं रूपम् एष्यति ॥८७॥

evam eva durniśāyāṁ kṛṣṇa pakṣāgame ciram |
taimiram bhāvayan rūpam bhairavaṁ rūpam eṣyati || 87 ||

evam eva dur-ni-shaayaam krishna-paksha-aa-game chiram
taimiram-bhaavayan-roopam bhairavam-roopam eshyati

Secrets are hidden in darkness
And difficult nights.
You awaken into a pang of aloneness,
A howl of separation.

This is the call of the Dark One,
The roar of life seeking its source.
The union you long for is within reach.

Throw off all hesitation.
Become one with the fear.
Plunge into the uncanny blackness,
Eyes wide open,
As if there were no other choice.

Vibrating with fierce tenderness,
Breathe intimately
With the Lord of Infinite Space.



एवम् एव निमील्यादौ नेत्रे कृष्णाभमग्रतः ।
प्रसार्य भैरवं रूपम् भावयंस् तन्मयो भवेत् ॥८८॥

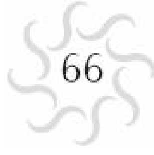
evam eva nimīlyādau netre kṛṣṇābhamagrataḥ |
prasārya bhairavaṁ rūpam bhāvayaṁs tan mayo bhavet || 88 ||

evam eva ni-meelyaadau–netre krishna–abham–a-gratah
pra-saarya bhairavam-roopam bhaavayan tat–mayah bhavet

Close your eyes and imagine
An expanse of terrible darkness surrounds you—
No objects, no light, no moon, no stars—
Nothing but blackness spreading to infinity.

Do not shrink in terror; do not turn away.
Give yourself to the blackness
With no hope of light.
Surrender completely.

Contemplating this feeling,
Merge with the mystery of night.



यस्य कस्येन्द्रियस्यापि व्याघाताच् च निरोधतः ।
प्रविष्टस्याद्वये शून्ये तत्रैवात्मा प्रकाशते ॥८९॥

yasya kasyendriyasyāpi vyāghātāc ca nirodhataḥ |
praviṣṭasyādvaye śūnye tatraivātmā prakāśate || 89 ||

yasya-kasya indriyasya api vi-aa-ghaataat cha ni-rodhatah
pra-vishtasya advaye shoonye tatra eva aatmaa pra-kaashate

Whenever any of the senses is impaired
It becomes a gateway to infinity.

Whether by deprivation, injury, or age,
Obstruction of the senses
Invites awareness of Soul.

The mind can no longer take the world for granted.
Attention spirals inward,
And touches the glistening emptiness—
The reality behind appearance.



अबिन्दुमविसर्गं च अकारं जपतो महान् ।
उदेति देवि सहसा ज्ञानौघः परमेश्वरः ॥९०॥

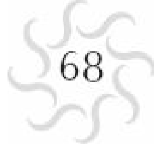
abindum avisargaṁ ca akāraṁ japato mahān |
udeti devi sahasā jñānaughaḥ parameśvaraḥ || 90 ||

a-bindum a-visargam cha a-kaaram japatah mahaan
udeti devi sahasaa jnaana-aughah parama-eeshvarah

Shining One, whose body flows with power—

When you are astonished,
Startled or afraid,
And gasp, a shocked inhalation—*AH!*
Right there, right there,
Sense the vibration of that gasp on your palette.

The shimmer of that sound in the mouth
Evokes a flood of knowing,
A gush of the divine.



वर्णस्य सविसर्गस्य विसर्गान्तं चितिं कुरु ।
निराधारेण चित्तेन स्पृशेद् ब्रह्म सनातनम् ॥९१॥

varṇasya savisargasya visargāntaṁ citiṁ kuru |
nirādhāreṇa cittena spṛśed brahma sanātanam || 91 ||

varnasya sa-vi-sargasya vi-sarga–antam chitim kuru
nir-aa-dhaarena chittena sprishet brahma–sanaatanam

Listen to the inner sound,
The one that you rode outward
Into this life,
Into this manifestation of yourself.

Savor the sound of *h h h a a a . . .* ,
Softly continuing, resonating through
All the nerves of your body, permeating,
Expanding everywhere.

Know this as the sound of ongoing creation.



व्योमाकारं स्वमात्मानं ध्यायेद् दिग्भिर् अनावृतम् ।
निराश्रया चितिः शक्तिः स्वरूपं दर्शयेत्तदा ॥९२॥

vyomākāraṁ svamātmānaṁ dhyāyed digbhir anāvṛtam |
nirāśrayā citiḥ śaktiḥ svarūpaṁ darśayet tadā || 92 ||

vyoma–aa-kaaram svam-aatmaanam dhyaayet digbhih an-aa-vritam
nir-aa-shrayaa chitih shaktih sva-roopam darshayet tadaa

Meditate on the Self as being
Vast as the sky,
A body of energy
Extending forever in all directions—
Above, below, all around.

In the embrace of infinite space,
Awaken to your true form—
Divine creative energy
Revealing Herself as you.



किञ्चिद् अङ्गं विभिद्यादौ तीक्ष्णसूच्यादिना ततः ।
तत्रैव चेतनां युक्त्वा भैरवे निर्मला गतिः ॥९३॥

kiñcid aṅgaṁ vibhidyādau tīkṣṇa sūcyādinā tataḥ |
tatraiva cetanāṁ yuktvā bhairave nirmalā gatiḥ || 93 ||

kinchit angam–vi-bhidya–adau teekshna–soochi–aadi naa tatah
tatra eva chetanaam yuktvaa bhairave nir-malaa gatih

Sting of a wasp.
Rip of a nail.
A razor's slice.
The needle's plunge.
A piercing word.
A stab of betrayal.
The boundary crossed.
A trust broken.
In this lacerating moment,
Pain is all you know.
Life is tattooing scripture into your flesh,
Scribing incandescence in your nerves.
Right here,
In this single searing point
Of intolerable concentration,
Wound becomes portal.
Brokenness surrenders to
Crystalline brilliance of Being.



चित्ताद्यन्तःकृतिर् नास्ति ममान्तर् भावयेद् इति ।
विकल्पानामभावेन विकल्पैर् उज्झितो भवेत् ॥९४॥

cittādy antaḥ kṛtir nāsti mamāntar bhāvayed iti |
vikalpānām abhāvena vikalpair ujjhito bhavet || 94 ||

chitta aadi antah-kritih na asti mama-antah bhaavayet iti
vi-kalpaanaam a-bhaavena vi-kalpaih ujjhitah bhavet

People talk about *mind* and *ego.*
Let's just drop this whole conversation.

Consider instead:
There is no mind.
There is no ego.

There is only the vivid reality
Of this surprising moment
At play, beckoning.



माया विमोहिनी नाम कलायाः कलनं स्थितम् ।
इत्यादिधर्मं तत्त्वानां कलयन् न पृथग् भवेत् ॥९५॥

māyā vimohinī nāma kalāyāḥ kalanaṁ sthitam |
ity ādi dharmaṁ tattvānāṁ kalayan na pṛthag bhavet || 95 ||

maayaa vi-mohinee naama kalaayaah kalanam sthitam
iti aadi dharmam-tattvanaam kalayan na prithak bhavet

The universe is here to reveal
Unlimited splendor—
Infinite diversity of expression.
No one can withstand her allure.

Adore the colors and shapes
Of her enchantment and know:
The One who permeates it all is a great lover.

Deeply relating above and below,
Mortal and immortal, transient and eternal,
Perceive the terrifying beauty.
Be free to suffer and to be thrilled,
To tolerate intolerable ravishment.



झगितीच्छां समुत्पन्नामवलोक्य शमं नयेत् ।
यत एव समुद्भूता ततस् तत्रैव लीयते ॥९६॥

jhagit īccāṁ samutpannām avalokya śamaṁ nayet |
yata eva samudbhūtā tatas tatraiva līyate || 96 ||

jhagit ichchhaam sam-ut-pannaam ava-lokya shamam nayet
yata eva sam-ud-bhoota tatah tatra eva leeyate

Just as a desire leaps up,
And you perceive the flash, the sparkle,
Quit from its play,
And maintain awareness
In that clear and shining place
From which all desire springs.



यदा ममेच्छा नोत्पन्ना ज्ञानं वा कस् तदास्मि वै ।
तत्त्वतोऽहं तथाभूतस् तल्लीनस् तन्मना भवेत् ॥९७॥

yadā mameccā notpannā jñānaṁ vā kas tadāsmi vai |
tattvato'haṁ tathā bhūtas tal līnas tan manā bhavet || 97 ||

yadaa mama ichchhaa na ut-pannaa jnaanam vaa kah tadaa asmi vai
tattvatah aham tathaa bhootah tat leenah tat–manaa bhavet

Radiant One, inquire:
Before desire arises in me, who am I?
Before I know anything, who am I?

Seek always the intimate joy
Of your original Self,
And move through this world in freedom.



इच्छायामथवा ज्ञाने जाते चित्तं निवेशयेत् ।
आत्मबुद्ध्यानन्यचेतास् ततस् तत्त्वार्थदर्शनम् ॥९८॥

icchāyām atha vā jñāne jāte cittaṁ niveśayet |
ātma buddhy ānanya cetās tatas tattvārtha darśanam || 98 ||

ichchhaayaam atha vaa jnaane jaate chittam ni-veshayat
aatma-buddhyaa an-anya-chetaah tatah tattva-artha-darshanam

Whenever a wanting moment comes,
Celebrate the rising of desire
As a sparkling impulse of energy
Vibrating the body into motion.

In a flash of knowing,
When intelligence arises,
Attend to this rising
As the illumination of the Self.

Desiring and knowing,
Knowing and desiring.
Just for a breath,
Forget what you want.
Forget what you know.
Receive the real teaching,
The essence of Earth, Air,
Fire, Water, and Space.



निर्निमित्तम् भवेज् ज्ञानं निराधारम् भ्रमात्मकम् ।
तत्त्वतः कस्यचिन् नैतद् एवम्भावी शिवः प्रिये ॥९९॥

nirnimittam bhavej jñānaṁ nirādhāram bhramātmakam |
tattvataḥ kasyacin naitad evam bhāvī śivaḥ priye || 99 ||

nir-nimittam bhavet jnaanam nir-aa-dhaaram bhrama-aatmakaam
tattvatah kasya chit na etat evam bhaavee shivah priye

Beloved,

Reject the reality of everything.
Deny the universe of appearance.
Say no to the phenomenal world.
Reside in the secret place inside.

As joy rises in the heart
At this sudden freedom,
Enter there and dwell!



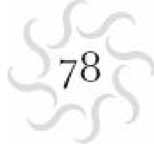
चिद्धर्मा सर्वदेहेषु विशेषो नास्ति कुत्रचित् ।
अतश्च तन्मयं सर्वम् भावयन् भवजिज् जनः ॥१००॥

cid dharmā sarva deheṣu viśeṣo nāsti kutracit |
ataś ca tan mayaṁ sarvam bhāvayan bhavajij janaḥ || 100 ||

chit-dharmaa sarva-deheshu vi-sheshah na-asti kutra chit
atah cha tan mayam sarvam bhaavayan bhavajit janah

The heart of the universe pulses in all hearts.
There is One who is the life in all forms.
There is One who is joyful in simply existing—
  In all bodies,
  As all bodies.

Explore the life that is the life of your present form.
One day you will discover
It is not different
From the life of the Secret One,
And your heart will sing triumphant songs
Of being at home everywhere.



कामक्रोधलोभमोहमदमात्सर्यगोचरे ।
बुद्धिं निस्तिमितां कृत्वा तत्तत्त्वमवशिष्यते ॥१०१॥

kāma krodha lobha moha mada mātsarya gocare |
buddhiṁ nistimitāṁ kṛtvā tat tattvam avaśiṣyate || 101 ||

kaama krodha lobha moha mada maatsarya gochare
buddhim ni-stimitaam kritvaa tat-tattvam ava-shishyate

Desire, lust, longing—
Anger humming in your blood.
Confusion, jealousy, bewilderment,
Swirling in your head.

Catch the first hint as passion rises,
The first quickening heartbeat.
Embrace that vibrancy
With a mind vast as the sky.

Witness the *elemental motion* of emotion:
Fire burning, illuminating,
Water gushing, cleansing,
Air inspiring, soothing,
Earth supporting, holding,
Space expanding, embracing.

You are in the temple of desire.
Go deeper still and rest in essence,
Awake to infinite spiritual energy
Surging into form.



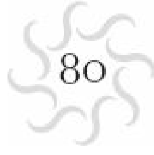
इन्द्रजालमयं विश्वं व्यस्तं वा चित्रकर्मवत् ।
भ्रमद् वा ध्यायतः सर्वम् पश्यतश्च सुखोद्गमः ॥१०२॥

indrajāla mayaṁ viśvaṁ vyastaṁ vā citra karmavat |
bhramad vā dhyāyataḥ sarvam paśyataś ca sukhodgamaḥ || 102 ||

indra-jaala-mayam vishvam vi-astam vaa chitra karmavat
bhramad vaa dhyaayatah sarvam pashyatash cha sukhah ud-gamah

Contemplate the entire universe
As a magic show
On the grandest scale imaginable.
Fabulous art, an immense painting in motion.
God is a magician whirling galaxies of fire,
Juggling atoms, planets, and us.
Everything, everything is fleeting.

Meditating on this magic,
Great happiness rises in the heart.



न चित्तं निक्षिपेद् दुःखे न सुखे वा परिक्षिपेत् ।
भैरवि ज्ञायतां मध्ये किं तत्त्वमवशिष्यते ॥१०३॥

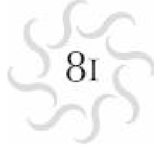
na cittaṁ nikṣiped duḥkhe na sukhe vā parikṣipet |
bhairavi jñāyatāṁ madhye kiṁ tattvam avaśiṣyate || 103 ||

na chittam ni-kshipet duhke na sukhe vaa pari-kshipet
bhairavi jnaayataam madhye kim tattvam ava-shishyate

That space is bad.
This space is good.
The ride is rough,
Or the going is smooth.
We are thrown into suffering,
We are thrown into joy.

Beloved Soul Mate—
Find the space in the center,
The pulsing spaciousness
Encompassing all opposites.

Here the essences of creation are at play:
Earth, Water, Fire, Air, and Space,
And the senses that perceive them.
The center is the dancing ground.



विहाय निजदेहस्थं सर्वत्रास्मीति भावयन् ।
दृढेन मनसा दृष्ट्या नान्येक्षिण्या सुखी भवेत् ॥१०४॥

vihāya nija dehasthaṁ sarvatrāsmīti bhāvayan |
dṛḍhena manasā dṛṣṭyā nānyekṣiṇyā sukhī bhavet || 104 ||

vihaaya nija-dehasthaam sarvatra asmi iti bhaavayan
dridhena manasaa drishtyaa na anya-eekshinyaa sukhee bhavet

Drop the thought,
"I am this body,"
Abandon the limitation,
"I am only here in this specific place and time."

Embrace instead,
I am not my body.
I am not this place.
I am not this time.
There is no place.
There is no time.

Realize,
"I am everywhere,"
Sustained by infinite bliss.



घटादौ यच् च विज्ञानम् इच्छाद्यं वा ममान्तरे ।
नैव सर्वगतं जातम् भावयन् इति सर्वगः ॥१०५॥

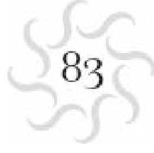
ghaṭādau yac ca vijñānam icchādyaṁ vā mamāntare |
naiva sarvagataṁ jātam bhāvayan iti sarvagaḥ || 105 ||

ghataadau yat cha vi-jnaanam ichchhaad yam vaa mama antare
na eva sarva-gatam jaatam bhaavayan iti sarva-gah

Trees have desires.
Rocks have knowledge.
Jugs are full of emptiness and joy.

All embodied ones have this in common.
All are propelled by the same One
Whose pulse beats in your breast.

Shed insularity.
Be all-pervasive,
Delighting in kinship everywhere.



ग्राह्यग्राहकसंवित्तिः सामान्या सर्वदेहिनाम् ।
योगिनां तु विशेषोऽस्ति सम्बन्धे सावधानता ॥१०६॥

grāhya grāhaka saṁvittiḥ sāmānyā sarva dehinām |
yogināṁ tu viśeṣo'sti sambandhe sāvadhānatā || 106 ||

graahya graahaka sam-vittih saamaanyaa sarva-dehinaam
yoginaam tu vi-sheshah asti sam-bandhe saa-vadhaanataa

Everyone knows, there is me,
And then there are all these others.
This is common to all.

Lovers know, there is me,
And the source of this me
Is ever mysterious.

Lovers know, each contact with another
Is a spark of the divine.
Lovers move through this world
Awake to intimacy,
Each touch a revelation
Never to be repeated.



स्ववद् अन्यशरीरेऽपि संवित्तिमनुभावयेत् ।
अपेक्षां स्वशरीरस्य त्यक्त्वा व्यापी दिनैर् भवेत् ॥१०७॥

svavad anya śarīre'pi saṁvittimanu bhāvayet |
apekṣāṁ svaśarīrasya tyaktvā vyāpī dinair bhavet || 107 ||

sva-vat anya–shareere api sam-vittim anu-bhaavayet
a-pekshaam sva-shareerasya tyaktvaa vyaapee dinaih bhavet

Extend your awareness
Into the bodies of other living beings,
Feel what those others are feeling.

Leave aside your body and its needs.
Abandon being so local.

Day by day, constrictions will loosen,
As you become attuned
To the current of life
Flowing through us all.



निराधारं मनः कृत्वा विकल्पान् न विकल्पयेत् ।
तदात्मपरमात्मत्वे भैरवो मृगलोचने ॥१०८॥

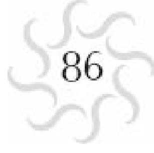
nirādhāraṁ manaḥ kṛtvā vikalpān na vikalpayet |
tad ātma paramātmatve bhairavo mṛgalocane || 108 ||

nir-aadhaaram manah kritvaa vi-kalpaan na vi-kalpayet
tat–aatma–parama-aatmatve bhairavah mriga-lochane

Toss aside your map of the world,
All your beliefs and constructs.
Dare the wild unknown.

Here in this terrifying freedom,
Naked before the universe,
Commune with the One
Who knows everything from the inside:
    Invisible power pervading everywhere.
    Divine presence permeating everything.

Breathe tenderly as
The lover of all beings.



सर्वज्ञः सर्वकर्ता च व्यापकः परमेश्वरः ।
स एवाहं शैवधर्मा इति दार्ढ्याच्छिवो भवेत् ॥१०९॥

sarvajñaḥ sarvakartā ca vyāpakaḥ parameśvaraḥ |
sa evāhaṁ śaiva dharmā iti dārḍhyāc chivo bhavet || 109 ||

sarva-jnah sarva-karttaa cha vi-aapakah parama-eeshvarah
sa eva aham shaiva-dharma iti daardhyaat bhavet shivah

There is a Knower who experiences everything.
There is a Presence dancing everywhere.
There is a Lover who embraces us all.

I am one with that Light.
I am one with that Power.
I am one with that Love.



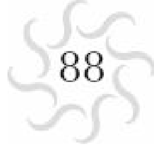
जलस्येवोर्मयो वह्नेर् ज्वालाभङ्ग्यः प्रभा रवेः ।
ममैव भैरवस्यैता विश्वभङ्ग्यो विभेदिताः ॥११०॥

jalasyevormayo vahner jvālā bhaṅgyaḥ prabhā raveḥ |
mamaiva bhairavasyaitā viśva bhaṅgyo vibheditāḥ || 110 ||

jalasya iva urmayah vahneh– jvaalaa-bhangyah pra-bhaa-raveh
mama eva bhairavasya etaa vishva–bhangyah vi-bheditaah

Waves rise from water.
Flames arise from fire.
Rays emanate from the sun.

So do you and I shine forth
From the Mysterious One.



भ्रान्त्वा भ्रान्त्वा शरीरेण त्वरितम् भुवि पातनात् ।
क्षोभशक्तिविरामेण परा सञ्जायते दशा ॥१११॥

bhrāntvā bhrāntvā śarīreṇa tvaritam bhuvi pātanāt |
kṣobha śakti virāmeṇa parā sañjāyate daśā || 111 ||

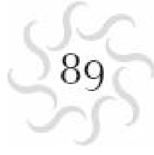
bhraantvaa bhraantvaa shareerena tvaritam bhuvi paatanaat
kshobha-shakti vi-raamena paraa sam-jaayate dashaa

Wander and wander to the point of exhaustion.
Whirl until you lose all control.
Dance until you are ready to drop.

Then drop!
Fall to the earth.

Surrender to the swirl of sensations
Surging through your form.
Dissolve in awe as arising energies
Continue the dance in your inner world.

Beyond motion and commotion,
Become the body of ecstasy.



आधारेष्व् अथवाऽशक्त्याऽज्ञानाच् चित्तलयेन वा ।
जातशक्तिसमावेशक्षोभान्ते भैरवं वपुः ॥११२॥

ādhāreṣv atha vā 'śaktyā 'jñānāc citta layena vā |
jāta śakti samāveśa kṣobhānte bhairavaṁ vapuḥ || 112 ||

aa-dhaareshu atha vaa ashaktyaa ajnaanaat chitta-layena vaa
jaata–shakti sam-aa-vesha kshobha-ante bhairavam–vapuh

You are stunned, powerless.
You thought you knew
What was going on.
Now you realize you don't have a clue.

You are stopped in your tracks.
Everything within your skin is shaking.
Enter this shaking.
Get curious.
Look around inside with wonder.
Unmind your mind.
All the walls have fallen down—
Go ahead and dissolve.

The One Who Has Always Been,
Who has seen much worse than this,
Is still here.



सम्प्रदायम् इमम् देवि शृणु सम्यग् वदाम्यहम् ।
कैवल्यं जायते सद्यो नेत्रयोः स्तब्धमात्रयोः ॥११३॥

sampradāyam imam devi śṛṇu samyag vadāmy aham |
kaivalyaṁ jāyate sadyo netrayoḥ stabdha mātrayoḥ || 113 ||

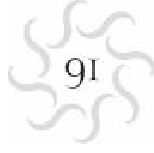
sam-pra-daayam imam devi shrinu sam-yak vadaami aham
kaivalyam jaayate sadyah netrayoh stabdha–maatrayoh

Radiant One,
Please listen to me.
The essence of all teachings is right here.
Open your eyes.

With a soft and steady gaze,
Look out upon creation.
Receive waves of light as they enter your eyes,
Singing of infinity.

The light touching the back of your eyes
Is immortal, born in the primal sun.
Be present to this enlightenment.

This is the ancient knowing,
A sanctuary that is everywhere.
Galaxies are flowers on this altar.



सङ्कोचं कर्णयोः कृत्वा ह्यधोद्वारे तथैव च ।
अनच्कमहलं ध्यायन् विशेद् ब्रह्म सनातनम् ॥११४॥

saṅkocaṁ karṇayoḥ kṛtvā hy adho dvāre tathaiva ca |
anackam ahalaṁ dhyāyan viśed brahma sanātanam || 114 ||

sam-kocham karnayoh kritvaa hi adhas-dvaare tathaa eva cha
an-achkam a-halam dhyaayan vishet brahma-sanaatanam

Close the ears that track the outer world,
Open the ears of the soul.
Engage the muscles at the base of the pelvis,
The intimate special places,
And cherish the vibrating energies there contained.

The song of creation,
Sustaining, enlivening,
Is thrumming in your body,
Whispering secrets.
Listen in.

Meditating on the symphony of your own life currents,
Enter the palace of the Creator.



कूपादिके महागर्ते स्थित्वोपरि निरीक्षणात् ।
अविकल्पमतेः सम्यक् सद्यस् चित्तलयः स्फुटम् ॥११५॥

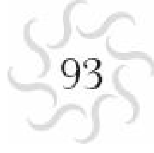
kūpādike mahāgarte sthitvopari nirīkṣaṇāt |
avikalpa mateḥ samyak sadyas citta layaḥ sphuṭam || 115 ||

koopaadike mahaa-garte sthitvaa upari nir-eekshanaat
a-vi-kalpa mateh sam-yak sadhyah chitta-layah sphutam

Position yourself safely
At the edge of a cliff or gorge.
Gaze into the abyss and see only depth.

Immediately,
Doubts dissolve,
Dilemmas disappear.

Be steady as mind releases itself
Into its natural freedom.



यत्र यत्र मनो याति बाह्ये वाभ्यन्तरेऽपि वा ।
तत्र तत्र शिवावास्था व्यापकत्वात्क्व यास्यति ॥११६॥

yatra yatra mano yāti bāhye vābhyantare'pi vā |
tatra tatra śivā vāsthā vyāpakatvāt kva yāsyati || 116 ||

yatra–yatra manah yaati baahye vaa abhi-antare api vaa
tatra–tatra shiva–ava-sthaa vi-aa-pakatvaat kva yaasyati

Wherever your heart journeys,
On whatever expedition
In your outer life and
Secret inner realms,
Breathe in intimacy with infinity.

Where can you go to avoid
The One in Whom All Exists?

Reach down into your deepest being.
Take a stand in eternity.

Walk through this world, see every situation
As an expansion of the mystery.
Savor the tremble of recognition—
The God in you is touching the God out there.



यत्र यत्राक्षमार्गेण चैतन्यं व्यज्यते विभोः।
तस्य तन्मात्रधर्मित्वाच् चिल्लयाद् भरितात्मता ॥११७॥

yatra yatrākṣa mārgeṇa caitanyaṁ vyajyate vibhoḥ |
tasya tanmātra dharmitvāc cil layād bharitātmatā || 117 ||

yatra-yatra aksha-maargena chaitanyam vi-ajyate vi-bhoh
tasya tat-maatra dharmitvaat chit-layaat bhritaa-aatmataa

Light moves on its pathways through space,
Enters the eyes, and
You absorb the luminous.

Each sense is a current of divinity,
Sparkling with mystery.
Light, motion, space, vision, awareness—
All are composed of omnipresence.
The senses connecting you to the outer world
Are paths of communion with the inner world.

Every sight, sound, smell, taste, touch—
A greeting from the Beloved.



क्षुताद्यन्ते भये शोके गह्वरे वा रणाद् द्रुते ।
कुतूहलेक्षुधाद्यन्ते ब्रह्मसत्तामयी दशा ॥११८॥

kṣutādy ante bhaye śoke gahvare vā raṇād drute |
kutūhale kṣudhādy ante brahma sattā mayī daśā || 118 ||

kshut-aadi-ante bhaye shoke gahvare vaa ranaat-drute
kutoohale kshudhaa-aadi-ante brahma-sattaa-mayee dashaa

Ravenous with hunger,
Exploding with joy,
Sneezing uncontrollably,
Burning with desire.
Reeling with amazement,
Staggered by grief,
Fleeing from danger,
Desperately lost.

Intensity awakens,
Wild attentiveness everywhere.

Ride the shockwave inward
To touch the Great Self,
The power from which you arise.



वस्तुषु स्मर्यमाणेषु दृष्टे देशे मनस् त्यजेत् ।
स्वशरीरं निराधारं कृत्वा प्रसरति प्रभुः ॥११९॥

vastuṣu smaryamāṇeṣu dṛṣṭe deśe manas tyajet |
svaśarīraṁ nirādhāraṁ kṛtvā prasarati prabhuḥ || 119 ||

vastushu smarya-maaneshu drishte deshe manah tyajet
sva-shareeram nir-aa-dhaaram kritvaa pra-sarati pra-bhuh

When the unforgettable calls you—
The memory of something noble,
Generous, inspiring,
Accept the gift.
Savor every detail.

The beauty we admire
Is a visitation from another moment,
Infusing body and heart.
Memory transports us beyond time and space,
Into the living presence of wonder.



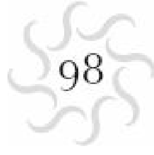
क्वचिद् वस्तुनि विन्यस्य शनैर् दृष्टिं निवर्तयेत् ।
तज् ज्ञानं चित्तसहितं देवि शून्यालायो भवेत् ॥१२०॥

kvacid vastuni vinyasya śanair dṛṣṭiṁ nivartayet |
taj jñānaṁ citta sahitaṁ devi śūnyālāyo bhavet || 120 ||

kvachit vastuni vi-nyasya shanaih drishtim ni-vartayet
tat-jnaanam chitta-sahitam devi shoonya-aa-layah bhavet

Engage your gaze with something, anything.
Adore its form and essence.
Give it your all.
Now tiptoe away into another realm,
As if not wanting to wake your lover.

Emptied of engagement,
Enter the temple of unknowing.
Dissolve in wonder—
Where does anything come from?



भक्त्युद्रेकाद् विरक्तस्य यादृशी जायते मतिः ।
सा शक्तिः शाङ्करी नित्यम् भवयेत्तां ततः शिवः ॥१२१॥

bhakty udrekād viraktasya yā dṛśī jāyate matiḥ |
sā śaktiḥ śāṅkarī nityam bhavayet tāṁ tataḥ śivaḥ || 121 ||

bhakti-ud-rekaat vi-raktasya yaa drishee jayaate matih
saa shakti-shaankaree nityam bhaavayet taam tatah shivah

Be wildly devoted to someone, or something.
Cherish every perception.
At the same time, forget about control.
Allow the Beloved to be herself and to change.

Passion and compassion, holding and letting go—
This ache in your heart is holy.
Accept it as the rise of intimacy
With life's secret ways.

Devotion is the divine streaming through you
From that place in you before time.
Love's energy flows through your body,
Toward a body, and into eternity again.
Surrender to this current of devotion
And become one with the Body of Love.



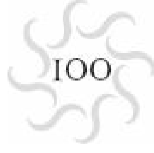
वस्त्वन्तरे वेद्यमाने सर्ववस्तुषु शून्यता ।
ताम् एव मनसा ध्यात्वा विदितोऽपि प्रशाम्यति ॥१२२॥

vastvantare vedya māne sarva vastuṣu śūnyatā |
tām eva manasā dhyātvā vidito 'pi praśāmyati || 122 ||

vastu-antare vedya-maane sarva-vastushu shoonyataa
taam eva manasaa dhyaatvaa viditah api pra-shaamyati

Love is particular.
When you love someone,
A tangible, touchable someone,
The whole world opens up.
If you want to know the universe,
Dare to love one person.

All the secret teachings are right here—
Go deeper, and deeper still.
The gift of concentration
Is the spaciousness that surrounds it.
Focus illuminates immensity.



किञ्चिज्ज्ञैर् या स्मृता शुद्धिः सा शुद्धिः शम्भुदर्शने ।
न शुचिर् ह्यशुचिस् तस्मान् निर्विकल्पः सुखी भवेत् ॥१२३॥

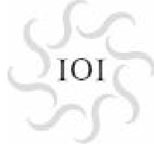
kiñcij jñair yā smṛtā śuddhiḥ sā śuddhiḥ śambhu darśane |
na śucir hy aśucis tasmān nirvikalpaḥ sukhī bhavet || 123 ||

kinchit jnaih yaa smritaa shuddhih saa shuddhih shambhu-darshane
na suchir hi a-shuchih tasmaat nir-vi-kalpah sukhee bhavet

All this talk of purity and impurity,
These are just opinions. Beyond them
Are the miraculous energies of creation.

Rays of light from a trillion suns
Illumine the altar of your sky.
Rolling blue-green oceans
Sanctify the air you breathe.
In this moment, you are inhaling their blessing.
Who are you to call any of this pure or impure?

Find the center around which everything revolves—
Stand here and be flooded with joy.



सर्वत्र भैरवो भावः सामान्येष्व् अपि गोचरः ।
न च तद्व्यतिरेक्तेण परोऽस्तीत्यद्वया गतिः ॥१२४॥

sarvatra bhairavo bhāvaḥ sāmānyeṣv api gocaraḥ |
na ca tad vyati rekteṇa paro 'stīty advayā gatiḥ || 124 ||

sarvatra bhairavah bhaavah saamaanyeshu api gocharah
na cha parah tat vi-ati-rekena parah asti iti a-dvayaa gatih

The reality of the divine
Is everywhere apparent,
Especially among people
Who haven't even thought about it!

The very nature of I-consciousness,
To be an individual,
Is in essence divine.

The excitement of the Eternal One
Is throbbing in the heart of every creature.

Know this, and be without superiority, inferiority,
Or resentment at your limitations.



समः शत्रौ च मित्रे च समो मानावमानयोः ।
ब्रह्मणः परिपूर्णत्वादिति ज्ञात्वा सुखी भवेत् ॥१२५॥

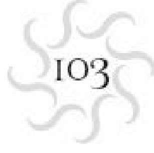
samaḥ śatrau ca mitre ca samo mānāvamānayoḥ ||
brahmaṇaḥ paripūrṇatvāt iti jñātvā sukhī bhavet || 125 ||

samah shatrau cha mitre cha samah maana-ava-maanayoh
brahmanah pari-poornatvaat iti jnaatvaa sukhee bhavet

It’s always the same.
Barbarians and blockheads, rival queens and kings,
The drama rolls on and on.
When people honor you,
You are supposed to feel honored.
When you don’t get respect, they expect
You to sulk in indignation.
One minute you are cruising on a throne in the sky,
The next you are standing on some bleak patch of dirt.

I say, the Sun regards all with a steady eye.
The force sustaining Earth and Sky
Calls everyone to awaken from this trance.
This whole world revolves around an axis, and I am that.

When you are friends with the Friend to All Beings
Nothing is the same.
Rich beyond measure, abundant beyond counting,
You can move through this life laughing.
Opinions of others have no rulership over you.



न द्वेषम् भावयेत्क्वापि न रागम् भावयेत्क्वचित् ।
रागद्वेषविनिर्मुक्तौ मध्ये ब्रह्म प्रसर्पति ॥१२६॥

na dveṣam bhāvayet kvāpi na rāgam bhāvayet kvacit |
rāga dveṣa vinirmuktau madhye brahma prasarpati || 126 ||

na dvesham bhaavayet kva api na raagam bhaavayet kvachit
raaga dvesha vi-nir-muktau madhye brahma pra-sarpati

Abandon all these attitudes
Of wanting to prolong pleasure
And avoid suffering.
Let the heart be itself and feel
Whatever is there.

Freed from clinging and avoiding,
The heart regains its poise
And revels in creation.

Plunging deep into its center,
Discover that the heart is moved
By a pulse that is everywhere.



यद् अवेद्यं यद् अग्राह्यं यच छुन्यं यद् अभावगम् ।
तत्सर्वम् भैरवम् भाव्यं तदन्ते बोधसम्भवः ॥१२७॥

yad avedyaṁ yad agrāhyaṁ yac chūnyaṁ yad abhāvagam |
tat sarvam bhairavam bhāvyaṁ tad ante bodha sambhavaḥ || 127 ||

yat a-vedyam yat a-graahyam yat shoonyam yat a-bhaavagam
tat sarvam bhairavam bhaavyam tad ante bodha sam-bhavah

Holiness permeates everywhere.
Senses cannot grasp it.
Images cannot represent it.

It is totally free—
Free to appear as form,
Free to be beyond form.

Heart and body and mind in unison,
Attend to the unimaginable.
In the intercourse of unknowable and known,
An awakening will be born in you
As you join with that reality
Which you already are.



नित्ये निराश्रये शून्ये व्यापके कलनोज्झिते ।
बाह्याकाशे मनः कृत्वा निराकाशं समाविशेत् ॥१२८॥

nitye nirāśraye śūnye vyāpake kalanojjhite |
bāhyākāśe manaḥ kṛtvā nirākāśaṁ samāviśet || 128 ||

nitye nir-aa-shraye shoonye vi-aa-pake kalana ujjhite
baahya-aakaashe manah kritvaa nir-aakaasham sam-aa-vishet

When you gaze in wonder at the stars,
Become enthralled
With the vast spaciousness between them.
Space is an incomprehensible being,
An invisible presence,
Independent, independently wealthy,
Without beginning or end, and *giving.*

Space bestows an unbounded theater
For suns, planets, constellations
To dance their graceful orbits.

Space offers you an infinite arena
To play, explore, and experience.
Receive this gift of freedom.



यत्र यत्र मनो याति तत्तत्तेनैव तत्क्षणम् ।
परित्यज्यानवस्थित्या निस्तरङ्गस् ततो भवेत् ॥१२९॥

yatra yatra mano yāti tat tat tenaiva tat kṣaṇam |
parityajyānavasthityā nistaraṅgas tato bhavet || 129 ||

yatra–yatra mano yati tat–tat tena eva tat–kshaanam
pari–tyajya ana-vasthityaa nis–tarangah tatah bhavet

Set your mind free to wander anywhere it wants,
Think any thought,
Ride any wave, surge in any direction.

The instant a thought springs up,
Abandon it and move on.
Don't let the mind rest anywhere.

In this way, gain entry to the bliss
Of the silent depths beneath the surf.



भया सर्वं रवयति सर्वदो व्यापकोऽखिले ।
इति भैरवशब्दस्य सन्ततोच्चारणाच् छिवः ॥१३०॥

bhayā sarvaṁ ravayati sarvado vyāpako 'khile |
iti bhairava śabdasya santatoccāraṇāc chivaḥ || 130 ||

bhayaa-sarvam ravayati sarvadah vi-aa-pakah a-khile
iti bhairava-shabdasya santatah ud-chaaranaat shivah

We all tremble, we all know fear.

Turn to the one life pervading the universe
Whose name dispels fear.
Find that name resonating in your heart.

Luminosity permeates the universe,
And the secret sound that hums
Everything into existence
Resounds everywhere.

Listening to the inner sound continually,
Become lovers with the Secret One.



अहं ममेदम् इत्यादि प्रतिपत्तिप्रसङ्गतः ।
निराधारे मनो याति तद्ध्यानप्रेरणाच् छमी ॥१३१॥

ahaṁ mamedam ity ādi pratipatti prasaṅgataḥ |
nirādhāre mano yāti tad dhyāna preraṇāc chamī || 131 ||

aham mama idam iti aadi pratti-patti pra-sangatah
nir-aa-dhaare manah yaati tat-dhyaana-preranaat shamee

The next time the thought arises,
"I want this," or "I think that,"
Grab hold of this "I"—perceive it by itself.
Wonder, who is this "I"?

I am animal,
I am human.
I am a loving heart,
I am a questing mind.
I am a particle of infinity,
I am a witness to creation.
I am consciousness itself.

In meditation, embrace all these dimensions.
Reach into the source: the luminous
World of dancing energies
In ever-changing relatedness.



नित्यो विभुर् निराधारो व्यापकश्चाखिलाधिपः ।
शब्दान् प्रतिक्षणं ध्यायन् कृतार्थोऽर्थानुरूपतः ॥१३२॥

nityo vibhur nirādhāro vyāpakaś cākhilādhipaḥ |
śabdān pratikṣaṇaṁ dhyāyan kṛtārtho 'rthānurūpataḥ || 132 ||

nityah vi-bhuh nir-aa-dhaarah vi-aa-pakah cha a-khila-adhipah
shabdaan pratik-shanam dhyaayan krita-arthah artha-anu-roopatah

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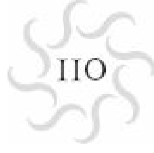
Native of eternity.
At home in infinity.
Breathing immortality.

Let these words sing in every cell.

Oceans of splendor.
Luminous energies of creation.
Pulsating everywhere always.

Hear these astounding words continually,
Each phrase an invocation.
Let the sounds ripple through you.

Resonate with the all-pervading hum of truth
And know, every fleeting moment is
Supported by forever.



अतत्त्वम् इन्द्रजालाभम् इदं सर्वमवस्थितम् ।
किं तत्त्वम् इन्द्रजालस्य इति दार्ढ्याच् छमं व्रजेत् ॥१३३॥

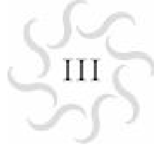
atattvam indrajālābham idaṁ sarvam avasthitam |
kiṁ tattvam indrajālasya iti dārḍhyāc chamaṁ vrajet || 133 ||

a-tattvam indra-jaalah-aa-bham idam sarvam ava-sthitam
kim tattvam indra-jaalasya iti daardhyaat shamam vrajet

The juggler with her spinning torches
Conjures dazzling wheels of fire.
The magician taps his wand and suddenly
A net of jewels sparkles in the darkness.

What do we love in magic?
Each gesture is a kind of jest,
Inviting us beyond itself
Into the deepest magic of all—
God alone is.

All that we see
Is the performance
Of the Divine Magician.
Stand at the center of this wonder,
And breathe the wild serene.



आत्मनो निर्विकारस्य क्व ज्ञानं क्व च वा क्रिया ।
ज्ञानायत्ता बहिर्भावा अतः शून्यम् इदं जगत् ॥१३४॥

ātmano nirvikārasya kva jñānaṁ kva ca vā kriyā |
jñānā yattā bahir bhāvā ataḥ śūnyam idaṁ jagat || 134 ||

aatmanh nir-vi-kaarasya kva jnaanam kva cha vaa kriyaa
jnaana–yattaa bahih–bhaavaa atah shoonyam idam jagat

There is no image you can hold,
No thought you can think,
That encompasses the Great Self.

Your essence
Is immortal and unchanging,
Yet it is the foundation for all that moves.

Rest in the shimmering emptiness
That is the source of this world,
And remember who you are.



न मे बन्धो न मोक्षो मे भीतस्यैता विभीषिकाः ।
प्रतिबिम्बम् इदम् बुद्धेर् जलेष्व् इव विवस्वतः ॥१३५॥

na me bandho na mokṣo me bhītasyaitā vibhīṣikāḥ |
pratibimbam idam buddher jaleṣv iva vivasvataḥ || 135 ||

na me bandhah na mokshah me bheetasya etaa vi-bheeshikaah
priti-bimbam idam bhuddheh jaleshu iva vi-vasvatah

Bhairava says,

Not for Me, bondage.
Not for Me, liberation.
I am beyond such nonsense.

The sun is not trapped
When it shines in a river,
Illuminating the lives of the fishes.
Nor is the sun freed again
When it reflects off a ripple
Back into the sky.

Bondage, freedom—
Notions arising from fear and separation.
Look upon the universe and see only Me.

Insight Verses

In the final verses 136–162, Bhairava offers encouragement to make these practices your own. Discover the ones that are always going on spontaneously in your deepest being and know that the elixir of life is always available to you. Devi is suffused with delight and embraces her lover.

INSIGHT VERSES 136-138



इन्द्रियद्वारकं सर्वं सुखदुःखादिसङ्गमम् ।
इतीन्द्रियाणि सन्त्यज्य स्वस्थः स्वात्मनि वर्तते ॥१३६॥

indriya dvārakaṁ sarvaṁ sukha duḥkhādi saṅgamam |
itīndriyāṇi santyajya svasthaḥ svātmani vartate || 136 ||

indriya-dvaarakam sarvaam sukha-duhkha aadi sangamam
iti indriyaani sam-tyajya sva-sthah sva-aatmani vartate

Consider all the pain and all the pleasure
You have ever experienced
As waves on a very deep ocean which you are.

From the depths, witness those waves,
Rolling along so bravely, always changing,
Beautiful in their self-sustaining power.

Marvel that once, you identified with
Only the surface of this ocean.
Now embrace waves, depths, undersea mountains,
Out to the farthest shore.

ज्ञानप्रकाशकं सर्वं सर्वेणात्मा प्रकाशकः ।
एकम् एकस्वभावत्वात्ज्ञानं ज्ञेयं विभाव्यते ॥१३७॥
मानसं चेतना शक्तिर् आत्मा चेति चतुष्टयम् ।
यदा प्रिये परिक्षीणं तदा तद् भैरवं वपुः ॥१३८॥

jñāna prakāśakaṁ sarvaṁ sarveṇātmā prakāśakaḥ |
ekam eka svabhāvatvāt jñānaṁ jñeyaṁ vibhāvyate || 137 ||
mānasaṁ cetanā śaktir ātmā ceti catuṣṭayam |
yadā priye parikṣīṇaṁ tadā tad bhairavaṁ vapuḥ || 138 ||

jnaana pra-kaashakam sarvam sarvena–aatmaa pra-kaashakah
ekam eka sva-bhaavatvaat jnaanam jneyam vi-bhaavyate
maanasam chetanaa shaktih aatmaa cha iti chatushtayam
yadaa priye pari-ksheenam tadaa tat bhairavam vapuh

The light of consciousness illumines the world.
The world reflects this splendor.
Energy and matter, essence and manifestation,
Reveal each other to each other.

Individual soul and cosmic energy,
Pulsing heart and infinite awareness—
Are secret lovers, always merging in oneness.
When the secret slips out, there is laughter
And a flash of brilliance in the air.

INSIGHT VERSES 139-140



निस्तरङ्गोपदेशानां शतम् उक्तं समासतः ।
द्वादशाभ्यधिकं देवि यज् ज्ञात्वा ज्ञानविज् जनः ॥१३९॥

nistaraṅgopadeśānāṁ śatam uktaṁ samāsataḥ |
dvādaśābhyadhikaṁ devi yaj jñātvā jñānavij janaḥ || 139 ||

nis-tarangah upa-deshaanaam shatam uktam samaasatah
dvaa-dashaabhih adi-hikam devi yat jnaa tvaa jnaanavit janah

Shining One,
In these teachings I have given you
More than a hundred and twelve ways
Of entering the stillness beneath the waves.
Cherish any one of these; make it your own.
Embody your inborn wisdom.

अत्र चैकतमे युक्तो जायते भैरवः स्वयम् ।
वाचा करोति कर्माणि शापानुग्रहकारकः ॥१४०॥

atra caikatame yukto jāyate bhairavaḥ svayam |
vācā karoti karmāṇi śāpānugraha kārakaḥ || 140 ||

atra cha eka tame yuktah jaayate bhairavah svayam
vaachaa karoti karmaani shaapta-anu-graha-kaarakah

Establish yourself in even one of these practices.
Join with the Goddess and God
Who are making love
In every particle of creation.

Honor the power of speech,
And with every breath,
Bless the life that surrounds you.

INSIGHT VERSES 141-143



अजरामरताम् एति सोऽणिमादिगुणान्वितः ।
योगिनीनाम् प्रियो देवि सर्वमेलापकाधिपः ॥१४१॥

ajarāmaratām eti so'ṇimādiguṇānvitaḥ |
yoginīnām priyo devi sarva melāpakādhipaḥ || 141 ||
jīvann api vimukto 'sau kurvann api na lipyate |

a-jarah a-marataam eti sah anima aadi guna–anvitah
yogineenaam priyah devi sarva mela–aa-pakaah adhi-pah
jeevan api vi-muktah asau kurvan api na lipyate

Delight in these meditations, my Adored One.
Play with creation as it plays with you.

Playing, become smaller than an atom,
Travel through the expanse of space,
Drink the elixir of immortality.

Bathe in the stream of these life-giving teachings.
Flirt with the tingling sparks of vitality
Surging through your body.
Live your whole life as a festival, a celebration,
Liberated in love and work.

श्री देवी उवाच ।
इदं यदि वपुर् देव परायाश्च महेश्वर ॥१४२॥
एवमुक्तव्यवस्थायां जप्यते को जपश्च कः ।
ध्यायते को महानाथ पूज्यते कश्च तृप्यति ॥१४३॥

śrī devī uvāca |
idaṁ yadi vapur deva parāyāś ca maheśvara || 142 ||
evam ukta vyavasthāyāṁ japyate ko japaś ca kaḥ |
dhyāyate ko mahānātha pūjyate kaś ca tṛpyati || 143 ||
hūyate kasya vā homo yāgaḥ kasya ca kiṁ katham |

shree devee uvaacha:
idam yadi vapuh deva paraayaah cha maha-eeshvara
evam ukta vi-ava-sthaayam japyate kah japah cha kah
dhyaayate kaha mahaa-naatha poojyate kah cha tripyati
hooyate kasya vaa homah yaagah kasya cha kim katham

The Goddess then asks,

If this is the nature of the universal Self,
Then who is to be worshipped?
Who do I invoke, and who do I meditate upon?

To whom do I offer oblations,
To whom do I sacrifice?
If everything is divine,
And consciousness merges with that divine essence,
Then what happens to the distinction
Between worshipper and worshipped?

INSIGHT VERSES 144-146



श्री भैरव उवाच ।
एषात्र प्रक्रिया बाह्या स्थूलेष्व् एव मृगेक्षणे ॥१४४॥
भूयो भूयः परे भावे भावना भाव्यते हि या ।
जपः सोऽत्र स्वयं नादो मन्त्रात्मा जप्य ईदृशः ॥१४५॥
ध्यानं हि निश्चला बुद्धिर् निराकारा निराश्रया ।
न तु ध्यानं शरीराक्षिमुखहस्तादिकल्पना ॥१४६॥

śrī bhairava uvāca |
eṣātra prakriyā bāhyā sthūleṣv eva mṛgekṣaṇe || 144 ||
bhūyo bhūyaḥ pare bhāve bhāvanā bhāvyate hi yā |
japaḥ so 'tra svayaṁ nādo mantrātmā japya īdṛśaḥ || 145 ||
dhyānaṁ hi niścalā buddhir nirākārā nirāśrayā |
na tu dhyānaṁ śarīrākṣi mukha hastādi kalpanā || 146 ||

shree bhairava uvaacha
eshaa atra pra-kriyaa baahyaa sthooleshu eva mriga-eekshane
bhooyah-bhooyah pare bhaave bhaavanaa bhaavyate hi yaa
japah sah atra svayam nadah mantra-aatmaa japya eedrishah
dhyaanam hi nish-chalaa buddhih nir-aa-kaaraa nir-aa-shrayaa
na tu dhyaanam shareera-akshi mukha-hasta aadi kalpanaa

The Lord Who Shines In Us All replied,

Oh Goddess, the practices you are speaking of
Refer only to the externals.
When you enter into the great Self,
All prayers go on inside you spontaneously
Without ceasing.

In reality, all songs of gratitude
And ecstatic lovemaking are resonating in
Every particle of creation at every moment.
When you are established in this recitation,
You are listening, and you hear them.

Plunging without reservation
Into the ocean of bliss is meditation.
No image, no thoughts, no prop.
Concentrating on the image of a god
With a body, eyes, and mouth is not meditation.

INSIGHT VERSES 147-148



पूजा नाम न पुष्पाद्यैर् या मतिः क्रियते दृढा ।
निर्विकल्पे महाव्योम्नि सा पूजा ह्यादराल् लयः ॥१४७॥

pūjā nāma na puṣpādyair yā matiḥ kriyate dṛḍhā |
nirvikalpe mahā vyomni sā pūjā hy ādarāl layaḥ || 147 ||

poojaa-naama na pushpa aadyaih yaa matih kriyate dridhaa
nir-vi-kalpe mahaa-vyomni saa poojaa hi aa-daraat layah

Worship does not mean offering flowers.
It means offering your heart
To the vast mystery
Of the universe.

It means letting your heart pulse
With the life of the universe,
Without thought and without reservation.

It means being so in love
That you are
Willing to dissolve
And be recreated in every moment.

अत्रैकतमयुक्तिस्थे योत्पद्येत दिनाद् दिनम् ।
भरिताकारता सात्र तृप्तिर् अत्यन्तपूर्णता ॥१४८॥

atraikatama yuktisthe yotpadyeta dinād dinam |
bharitā kāratā sātra tṛptir atyanta pūrṇatā || 148 ||

atra eka-tama yuktisthe yaa ut-padyeta dinaat dinam
bharitaa–kaarataa saa atra triptih atyanta–poornataa

Being transformed by even one of these practices,
Fullness of experience develops breath by breath.
One day the desire of the self for the great Self
Is consummated.
Come ready for that moment!

Insight Verses 149-150



महाशून्यालये वह्नौ भूताक्षविषयादिकम् ।
हूयते मनसा सार्धं स होमश् चेतनास्रुचा ॥१४९॥

mahā śūnyālaye vahnau bhūtākṣa viṣayādikam |
hūyate manasā sārdhaṁ sa homaś cetanā srucā || 149 ||

mahaa-shoonya-aa-laye vahnau bhootaa-aksha-vishaya-aadikam
hooyate manasaa saardham sa homah chetanaa sruchaa

The real transmutation,
The most sacred offering,
Is to pour the elements of your body,
All of your sensual impressions,
Into the fire of the Great Void.

Your richness of experience
Is the wine you offer
To the divinity that is everywhere.

यागोऽत्र परमेशानि तुष्टिर् आनन्दलक्षणा ।
क्षपणात्सर्वपापानां त्राणात्सर्वस्य पार्वति ॥१५०॥

yāgo 'tra parameśāni tuṣṭir ānanda lakṣaṇā |
kṣapaṇāt sarva pāpānāṁ trāṇāt sarvasya pārvati || 150 ||

yaagah atra parama-eeshaani tushtih aananda-lakshanaa
kshapanaat sarva-paapaanaam traanaat sarvasya paarvati

The real sacrifice
Is to let your sins be destroyed
By the vast power of the universe.
It is to live in radiant bliss.

Senses dissolve, mind dissolves,
The objects of sense dissolve,
Even the void is dissolved.
This is transcendence.

INSIGHT VERSES 151-152



रुद्रशक्तिसमावेशस् तत्क्षेत्रम् भावना परा ।
अन्यथा तस्य तत्त्वस्य का पूजा काश्च तृप्यति ॥१५१॥

rudra śakti samāveśas tat kṣetram bhāvanā parā |
anyathā tasya tattvasya kā pūjā kāś ca tṛpyati || 151 ||

rudra-shakti-sam-aa-veshah tat-kshetram bhaavanaa paraa
anyathaa tasya tattvasya kaa poojah kah cha tripyati

Emanating from the embrace
Of the Goddess and her God
Is a wheel of delicious divine energies.

The center of this wheel
Is right where you are.
Live here, and let your heart stream
With an unending flow of adoration.
In this way, tend the altar of love.

स्वतन्त्रानन्दचिन्मात्रसारः स्वात्मा हि सर्वतः ।
आवेशनं तत्स्वरूपे स्वात्मनः स्नानम् ईरितम् ॥१५२॥

svatantrānanda cin mātra sāraḥ svātmā hi sarvataḥ |
āveśanaṁ tat svarūpe svātmanaḥ snānam īritam || 152 ||

sva-tantra-aananda chit-maatra-saarah sva-aatmaa hi sarvatah
aa-veshanam tat sva-roope sva-aatmanah snaanam eeritam

The real purification with water
Is to bathe in the essence of eternity
And stand in your true body—
Stunning autonomy, luminous bliss,
Invisible consciousness pulsating
Always, in every direction.

INSIGHT VERSES 153-154



यैर् एव पूज्यते द्रव्यैस् तर्प्यते वा परापरः ।
यश्चैव पूजकः सर्वः स एवैकः क्व पूजनम् ॥१५३॥

yair eva pūjyate dravyais tarpyate vā parāparaḥ |
yaś caiva pūjakaḥ sarvaḥ sa evaikaḥ kva pūjanam || 153 ||

yair eva poojyate dravyaih tarpyate vaa para–a-parah
yah cha eva poojakah sarvah sa eva ekah kva poojanam

The flowers, the incense,
Grain, spices, and honey
Offered in ritual
Are made out of the same divine stuff as you.
Who then is worshipped?

व्रजेत्प्राणो विशेज् जीव इच्चया कुटिलाकृतिः ।
दीर्घात्मा सा महादेवी परक्षेत्रम् परापरा ॥१५४॥

vrajet prāṇo viśej jīva icchayā kuṭilā kṛtiḥ |
dīrghātmā sā mahā devī para kṣetram parāparā || 154 ||

vrajet praanah vishet jeeva ichchhayaa kutilaa-kritih
deergha-aatmaa saa mahaa-devee para-kshetram para-a-paraa

Breath flows in, breath flows out,
Traveling always the curving path of the Goddess.
Breath flows spontaneously of its own will.
Thus all breathing beings
Continually give reverence to *Her.*
Be conscious of this unconscious prayer,
For She is the most holy place of pilgrimage.

She wishes for you to enter this temple,
Where each breath is adoration
Of the infinite for the incarnate form.

INSIGHT VERSES 155-156



अस्यामनुचरन् तिष्ठन् महानन्दमयेऽध्वरे ।
तया देव्या समाविष्टः परम् भैरवमाप्नुयात् ॥१५५॥

asyām anucaran tiṣṭhan mahānanda maye 'dhvare |
tayā devyā samāviṣṭaḥ param bhairavam āpnuyāt || 155a ||

asyaam anu-charan tishthan mahaa–aananda–maye adhvare
tayaa devyaa sam-aa-vishtah param bhairavam aapnuyaat

Breath flows
Into this body
As a nectar of the gods.

Every breath is a whisper
Of the Goddess:
“Here is the ritual I ask of you—
Be the cup
Into which I pour this bliss,
The elixir of immortal peace.”

सकारेण बहिर्याति हकारेण विषेत् पुनः ।
हंसहंसेत्यमुं मन्त्रं जीवो जपति नित्यशः ॥१५५॥
षट्शतानि दिवा रात्रौ सहस्राण्येकविंशतिः ।
जपो देव्याः समुद्दिष्टः सुलभो दुर्लभो जडैः ॥१५६॥

sa kāreṇa bahir yāti ha kāreṇa viṣet punaḥ |
haṁsa haṁsety amuṁ mantraṁ jīvo japati nityaśaḥ || 155b ||
ṣaṭ śatāni divā rātrau sahasrāṇyekaviṁśatiḥ |
japo devyāḥ samuddiṣṭaḥ sulabho durlabho jaḍaiḥ || 156 |||

sa-kaarena bahir yaati ha-kaarena vishet punah
hamsa–hamsa iti amum mantram jeeva japati nityashah
shat-shataani divaa–raatrau sahasraani eka-vimshatih
japah devyaah sam-ud-dishtah su-labhah dur-labhah jadaih

The breath flows out with the sound *sa,*
The breath flows in with the sound *ha.*
Thus thousands of times a day,
Everyone who breathes is adoring the Goddess.

Know this, and be in great joy.
Listen to the ongoing prayer that is breath.
Life shall dance in you
A dance of ever-renewing delight.

Insight Verses 157-159



इत्येतत्कथितं देवि परमामृतम् उत्तमम् ।
एतच् च नैव कस्यापि प्रकाश्यं तु कदाचन ॥१५७॥

ity etat kathitaṁ devi paramāmṛtam uttamam |
etac ca naiva kasyāpi prakāśyaṁ tu kadācana || 157 ||

iti etat kathitam devi parama-amritam uttamam
etat cha na eva kasya api pra-kaashyam tu kadaa-chana

Adorable Goddess,
These practices are a nectar I share with you.
Drink from this cup whenever you are thirsty
Or crave to be refreshed in the essence of life.

Know that this ambrosia is available to you
Everywhere, for the universe is made out of it.
Simply go to the intersection of flesh and spirit,
Breathe the tiny sparks that fly.

Within this very body
Are many gateways to the infinite,
Where incarnation and immortality
Consummate their passion for each other.

परशिष्ये खले क्रूरे अभक्ते गुरुपादयोः ।
निर्विकल्पमतीनां तु वीराणाम् उन्नतात्मनाम् ॥१५८॥
भक्तानां गुरुवर्गस्य दातव्यं निर्विशङ्कया।
ग्रामो राज्यम् पुरं देशः पुत्रदारकुटुम्बकम्॥ १५९ ॥

para śiṣye khale krūre abhakte guru pādayoḥ |
nirvikalpa matīnāṁ tu vīrāṇām unnatātmanām || 158 ||
bhaktānāṁ guru vargasya dātavyaṁ nirviśaṅkayā |
grāmo rājyam puraṁ deśaḥ putra dāra kuṭumbakam || 159 ||

para-shishye khale kroore a-bhakte guru paadayoh
nir-vi-kalpa-mateenaam tu veeraanaam unnata-aatmanaam
bhaktaanam guru vargasya daatavyam nir-vi-shankayaa
graamo raajyam puram deshah putra-daara-kutumbakam

Share these teachings
With all generous-hearted people
Who come your way and ask.

When you meet someone
Whose heart is vibrating
With the flow of love,
Let your words and energies
Be free as your breathing.

Insight Verses 160



सर्वम् एतत्परित्यज्य ग्राह्यम् एतन् मृगेक्षणे ।
किम् एभिर् अस्थिरैर् देवि स्थिरम् परम् इदं धनम् ।
प्राणा अपि प्रदातव्या न देयं परमामृतम् ॥१६०॥

sarvam etat parityajya grāhyam etan mṛgekṣaṇe |
kim ebhir asthirair devi sthiram param idaṁ dhanam |
prāṇā api pradātavyā na deyaṁ paramāmṛtam || 160 ||

sarvam etat pari-tyajya graahyam etat mriga-eekshane
kim ebhih a-sthiraih devi sthiram param idam dhanam
praana api pra-daatavyati na deyam parama-amritam

Friends, relatives, neighbors, people who abide
In your village, city, country—
Be not concerned with their attitudes
Toward these teachings.
Everyone is discovering the intimate universe
In their own way.

This nectar is here
Within every breath, every desire, every transition
From waking to sleeping and sleeping to waking.

Once you have set out on the path of intimacy
With the immortal essence of life,
Never turn your back on it, my Shining One.
Never turn away.
Though every moment be surprising,
Revelatory, unrecognizable, and full of wonder,
Continue to cherish each breath.
Live in gratitude for the ambrosia we imbibe
In each turning, outbreath to inbreath into outbreath.

Insight Verses 161-162



श्री देवी उवाच ।

देवदेव माहदेव परितृप्तास्मि शङ्कर ।
रुद्रयामलतन्त्रस्य सारमद्यावधारितम् ॥१६१॥

सर्वशक्तिप्रभेदानां हृदयं ज्ञातमद्य च ।
इत्युक्त्वानन्दिता देवि कण्ठे लग्ना शिवस्य तु ॥१६२॥

śrī devī uvāca |
deva deva māhadeva paritṛptāsmi śaṅkara |
rudrayāmala tantrasya sāram adyāvadhāritam || 161 ||
sarva śakti prabhedānāṁ hṛdayaṁ jñātam adya ca |
ity uktvānanditā devi kaṇṭhe lagnā śivasya tu || 162 ||

shree devee uvaacha
deva-deva mahaa-deva pari-tripta asmi shankara
rudra-yaamala-tantrasya saaram adya ava-dhaaritam
sarva-shakti pra-bhedaanaam hridayam jnaatam adya cha
iti uktvaa aananditaa devee kanthe lagnaa shivasya tu

Devi replies,

You whose drum is the pulse of creation,
You whose dance is the motion of all worlds,
You who are more intimate than my very breath,
I am suffused with satisfaction.
My questions have led to fullness.

You have sung to me of the ways of union
Of the Goddess with Her God,
Time and space, personal and impersonal,
Energy and form, finite and infinite.
You have sung the song
Of being at home in the universe.

Having said that, the Goddess,
Radiant with delight,
Embraces her lover.

PART TWO



Yukti Practice Transmissions

The Vijnana Bhairava Tantra offers 112 meditation practices, each one an invitation to come in and be at home in yourself and in the universe. The practices are presented in verses made up of four to ten Sanskrit words, and every individual word is a tool of thought, a *mantra.* In this section, one Sanskrit word from each sutra is presented as a portal into a rich world of experience. Also on the page are hints for engaging with each of the 112 practices, a few highlights that may attract your interest when you are in the *manyu* (spirit, mind, mood, mettle, passion) to explore a particular sutra. These are intended to illuminate a skill you may find useful in scouting your inner world.

In the meditation traditions, a transmission is an electric realization, an *aha* moment. Often, you are reminded of something you already know and love. You recognize a truth, and your life-force is awakened. In any given sutra, every Sanskrit word offers myriad opportunities to receive a transmission, because Sanskrit is engineered so that each word is often made up of five or ten images, each circling around a nucleus, a tiny thought.

The nucleus of a Sanskrit word is often a principle. Take, for example, the word *yoga.* The nucleus of yoga is *yuj,* "to yoke or join." The central principle is "joining." Around this nucleus dozens of diverse meanings are orbiting: yoking horses to a chariot, calling up soldiers to join in ranks and form an army, putting an arrow on a bowstring, putting on armor, to embrace something or someone, to join one's self to, to be united in marriage, injecting semen, joining up of the individual soul with the universal soul, joining up all the elements necessary to form a business, joining a series of words together into a sentence, and lining up all the elements of a trick, con job, or fraud. That is only thirteen of the meanings of *yuj;* the Sanskrit-English dictionary lists over fifty in all.

As you get to know a Sanskrit word, form your own mental images to go with each of the many meanings in the definition. As you learn, little jokes and puns will pop up in your mind, and once you start combining words, the metaphors just keep on mixing. And in between these images, there is an emptiness that is always beckoning, inviting you to feel spacious and expansive. Learning to be entertained by the play of matter, energy, and emptiness is one of the central practices of meditation described in this text.

Reading a list of Sanskrit word definitions requires an unusual kind of attention. You may want to take a breath after each phrase in a definition, or even go for a walk with it. Let the meaning in the image surprise you. In this way, one bit at a time, you can begin to learn to think in Sanskrit. It can take hours or even days to get the feel for one word, but you are learning on a deep level.

For example, in verse 15, in the introduction to the text, Bhairava gives us an amazing word: *antaḥsvanubhavananda.*

Unfolding this word we see:

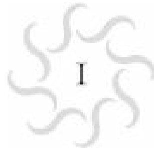
Antar: Within, between, amongst. In the middle or interior. Out of the midst of.
Sva: One's own. One's self. The ego. The human soul.
Anubhava: Experience. Knowledge derived from personal observation or experiment.

Perception. Apprehension. Fruition. Understanding. Impression on the mind not derived from memory. Cognition. Consciousness. Custom, usage.

Ananda: Happiness, joy, enjoyment, sensual pleasure, one of the three attributes of *atman* or *brahman* in the vedanta philosophy. In drama, the thing wished for, the end of the drama. A kind of flute. The sixteenth *muhurta.* A name of Shiva.

Within you, through personal observation and experiment, you can have the direct experience of contact with the soul and as a result of that knowledge be filled with happiness, joy, and sensual pleasure.

In the Vijnana Bhairava Tantra, one of the words for “a practice,” or meditation technique, is *yukti,* a variation on the word *yoga. Yukti* has the sense of “joining together the essential elements at the right time and place” and also “practice, skill, craft, workmanship, and art.” As we practice meditation, we want to be continually refining our craft, becoming more skillful in joining up all the essential elements of our own inner riches so that we can thrive in the outer world.



प्राण

PRĀṆA

Prana: Filled, full. The breath of life. Respiration, spirit, vitality. The five vital airs: *prana, apana, vyana, samana,* and *udana.* Breath as a sign of strength. Vigor, energy, power—with all one's strength, or with all one's heart.

Practice

Bhairava begins the 112 yuktis with this invitation to Devi: *urdhva prana*—"as we exhale, the breath of life flows upwards into heaven, where it came from." *Urdhva* is "upward moving, rising, to go upwards into heaven." *Prana* is "the breath of life."

The next two words are *adhas jiva*—"as you inhale, the breath of life flows downwards through the body to the genitals." *Adhas* is "below, down, in the lower region, the external genitals—and specifically in a woman's body the labia majora, labia minora, clitoris, and vestibule of the vagina." *Jiva* means "the individual soul, the living or personal soul as distinguished from the universal soul," and "the principle of life, the breath."

Breathing is rhythm, a play of opposites. Here you are invited to enjoy the play of *prana,* the universal breath of life and *jiva,* the individual soul, the way the breath of life condenses into you. Another play of opposites is up and down—upward into the sky above you and downward into the brightness of the pelvis.

A good way to initiate yourself into this practice is to go outside, where you can feel the sky and earth, and take a standing posture. As you breathe out, let your hands flow upward along the front of your body to the area above your head. As you breathe in, let your hands float back down toward your pelvis. This is an easy gesture, as eloquent as conductors waving their hands as they direct an orchestra. After you get the sense of this wonderful flow, you can continue the movement in any posture—sitting or lying down or dancing. Exhaling upwards, give your breath to infinity. Inhaling downwards, receive the nourishing fullness of your individuality.

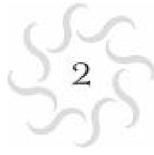
As you exhale, whisper the word *prana* to yourself, and notice your relationship to the mystery of universality. Follow the motion upwards from your heart into heaven. As you inhale and receive the breath, whisper *jiva,* and notice your relationship with the mystery of individuality. Allow your attention to travel down from the space above your head, to the heart, to the area between your legs, and even to your feet. Everywhere in the body is spiritual and sacred.

As you get used to this movement, add another motion: tilt the head back slightly as you breathe out, so you are facing upward, and tilt the head downward slightly as you inhale.

The rhythm of the breath happens twenty-two thousand times a day. When you spend just a few of these times in delight and wonder, it begins to transform the other 99.999 percent that you

take for granted.

Breathing out, quietly celebrate, “I am part of the life of the universe.” Breathing in, marvel, “I am a living soul, an individual.” *Jiva,* meaning “individual soul,” also suggests that from the very first breath, you can modify any meditation instructions to suit your unique individuality. For example, if you feel enthusiastic, your celebration phrases could be, “Oh my God! I am alive!”



मरुत्

MARUT

Marut: Lightning and thunderbolts, roaring like lions. The flashing ones, shining ones, storm gods, Indra's companions, children of heaven or of the ocean, armed with golden weapons. Wind, air, breath, and the five winds, or pranas, in the body.

Practice

Marut suggests that breath is wild and magical, like lightning. Let go of your civilized self and welcome your wildness, your storms. You are part of nature, part of the earth, a dynamic and self-sustaining little system within the larger ecosphere. The electrifying magnificent heavenly breath, *marut,* keeps on quickening the life-force, rolling on, rotating *(vartana),* inwardly *(antar)* and outwardly *(bahir).*

The practice here is to do nothing—simply enjoy the show as this magic stuff flows inward, turns, and then flows outward and turns again. Welcome the flash of sensations, emotions, thoughts, and breath.

Lightning is flashing in the body. Breath is moved by a spark of electricity. Thoughts are waves of subtle electricity flashing through your body and brain. Your heart beats every second or so, and each pulsing of the heart is incited by a little spark of electricity. Welcome it all. Revel in it as you would the rain if you were a farmer. *Prana* and *jiva,* used in the previous verse, are both names of *maruts.* Breathing is part of nature.

Breath is exciting, and it propels itself. It's a charging, dynamic process of life, roaring along. If you want to know peace, let breath excite you.

As you explore the sensations that are flowing in your body as you are breathing right now, you might consider one of these thoughts:

I am awake to the electricity of life.
The dynamic power of breath is renewing me moment by moment.
Nature is wild and serene, and so am I.

When you use a phrase such as one of these as a tool of thought in meditation, pulsate with it. Whisper or think the phrase, very lightly. Then notice whatever feelings, sensations, or images the phrase evokes. Enjoy the sensations of breathing for a few moments. Then gently think the phrase again.

Welcome all random thoughts, and don't judge your experience. Anything you are tempted to

try to block out is actually some part of your own life electricity and wildness—your *marut* energy—that needs your attention.



शक्ति

ŚAKTI

Shakti: Power and skill in the use of power. Ability, strength, might, effort, energy, capability, effectiveness, efficacy of a remedy, regal power, the energy or active power of a deity personified as his wife and worshipped by the Shakta (sect of Hindus), the female organ (as worshipped by the Shakta sect either actually or symbolically), the power or signification of a word, the power or force or most effective word of a sacred text or magic formula, creative power of imagination (of a poet).

Practice

Shakti is power in all forms; she is the energy or active power of the divine. She is the power of generation and creativity, the power of words, the energy of mantras, and the creative power of imagination. Shakti is *pranashakti*, the life-force expressing herself as the flow of energy through the body. Shakti is Mother Nature.

Meditate on shakti as the dynamic breath of life within you. In the middle *(madhya)* of the motion of breathing, delight in the splendor of life. Attend to breath as play, enjoy the rushing motion toward the end of the exhalation and inhalation, and savor the tiny movements as the flow reverses from one to the other.

There are little moments at the end of the exhale and again at the end of the inhale when the air is not moving in a specific direction. It is not still; it is like a river, with eddies and swirls, and the blood is absorbing oxygen and giving off carbon dioxide. A lot is happening, but it's a quiet space of refreshing calmness. You can rest your attention in these turnings. A thoughtlessness opens up. In these moments, life is twiddling its thumbs, rebooting.

In this quiet swirling, you can say to yourself: "I am filled with the power of life."

Or you could use a prayer or verse from your native religion to say something like, "God is breathing in me the breath of life."

You could think the word *shakti* as a mantra, uttering it as an inner expression of awe. Whenever you use a Sanskrit word as a mantra, whisper it softly for a couple of minutes as you are getting used to the word. If you really like the word, it will continue to resonate in your awareness. From there, you can follow it into silence and spaciousness.



कुम्भक

KUMBHAKA

Kumbhaka: A pot, a measure. A jar, pitcher, water pot, ewer (jug with a wide mouth). The sign of the zodiac Aquarius.

Practice

With this sutra, we are invited to attend with tenderness to how we embrace the breath. There are many yuktis here. One is to consider the lungs to be a pot for holding the breath. *Kumbhaka* has the connotation of a jug of elixir, a chalice, a vessel used in ritual offerings to the gods. We revere the air flowing in and out of our lungs as if it is an elixir, and we hold the breath as we hold a chalice of some precious substance we are imbibing.

In pranayama, you may hold the breath in the sense of stopping it. But in meditation, holding the breath can mean holding it as you would a lover. Holding is an embrace, a welcoming touch, contact skin to skin. In lovemaking, we hold the other person in order to allow them to move and allow ourselves to move. In certain sweet moments, the action pauses. Holding and embracing do not mean stopping the flow of movement. Embrace the flow of breathing as you would something infinitely valuable, and you will know peace. There is a world of skill in the way we receive, hold, embrace, cherish the breath.

How do you hold a baby, a cat, a lover? How do you hold a note when singing? Develop a light touch in your practice, so you can hold a thought, a mantra, a breath, as lightly as you would a hummingbird that has landed on your finger. It alights on you. There is no sense of capture. It is a miraculous meeting. Many meditation techniques emerge from your skill at holding, embracing, and cherishing your relationship with the world.

Meditation enhances our capacity for aesthetic perception and rapture. Put yourself in situations of such joy and surprise that your breathing pauses spontaneously in awe—"it takes my breath away." As your capacity for this type of *kumbhaka* develops, fill it with the beauty of nature and great art, whatever is so beautiful you want to drink it in.



सूक्ष्म

SŪKṢMA

Suksma: Subtle. Minute, small, fine, thin, narrow, short, feeble, trifling, insignificant, unimportant. Acute, subtle, keen understanding. Nice. Atomic. Intangible, intangible matter. The subtle, all-pervading spirit; the Supreme Soul. Marrow. Woven silk.

Practice

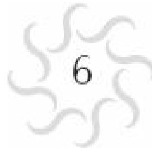
Suksma has a range of meanings, including "insignificant, unimportant." This is a teaching: what you are looking for is right here, but it looks insignificant to you. The gateways that open to your inner life are here, in minute perceptions easily overlooked. The inspiration and energy you need for your meditation practice is already present; tune in to the subtle aspects of your sensory experience that are so tiny they seem intangible and atomic. Be alert for that which is as fine as woven silk.

You can think of *suksma* as subtle sensuous experience. You walk outside on a beautiful day and feel a tingle of sexual electricity, just because you are alive. It lasts a second and then disperses throughout your whole body. But your next breath is a bit more enjoyable, and colors seem brighter. There is a microscopic level of sexual excitement flowing around your skin. That is subtle sensuality.

Or say you are listening to music. At a certain moment, one of the players touches a string lightly, and the quiet sound moves you deeply. The music doesn't have to get louder for you to feel its power. That is subtle sound.

Or consider a moment when you are loving someone, and the lightest touch means everything. A delicate and slow touch can feel more intense than big motions. That is subtle touch.

Subtle sensing is fun and freeing. You take more and more pleasure from less and less input. In this yukti, you are invited to take pleasure in subtle electrical sensations flashing through your body, from the *mula,* the root of your spine, through the sexual centers, into the belly, heart, throat, and head. The verse reinforces the notion of subtle and minute with the word *kirana,* meaning "dust, very minute dust" and "beam of light, like the rays of the sun, or moonbeam." We sense the energy of life sparkling like dust motes, drifting slowly in a beam of afternoon sun.



क्रम

KRAMA

Krama: Progressing step by step. Succession, order, uninterrupted or regular process, sequence. The position taken by animals before springing or attacking. Method. Attainment of the object desired.

Practice

Sometimes when you are making love or meditating, the energy of delight will slowly build and flow through each area of the body, touching everywhere, tickling and massaging. Here the use of the word *krama* alerts us to notice both the progression of energy movement and the sense of it being poised to spring. Watch cats creeping up on something, step by step, and then crouching to spring. Observe this progression in your mind and body: A series of thoughts will lead up to something, and then suddenly a realization will spring into your perception. In sex, the energy builds up and then suddenly gushes.

Whenever there is energy, there is the play of tension and release. In tantra, we are stretching our capacity to pay attention. In music, tension builds and then is released. In physics, tension pertains to stretching. In electricity, tension indicates voltage—the higher the tension, the higher the voltage. In sex and meditation, energy sensations may intensify in one area of the body until we feel we can't take it anymore, then release and stream to the next area or dissolve in orgasm.

We each have our own individual preferences in terms of sequence, which may vary from day to day. *Krama* suggests both inevitability and surprise. Attention is more engaged when we have the sense that we are going to get release, yet don't know when.

In your body, you may have noticed, there are areas of more energetic intensity, such as the perineum, sexual organs, lower belly, solar plexus, heart, throat, forehead, top of the skull. In the physical body, there are nerve plexuses corresponding to these interesting places. In the subtle body, the body made of prana, these networks are sometimes called *chakras.* The word *chakra* means "wheel, a potter's wheel, an astronomical circle, a cycle of years or seasons; a whirlpool." Your physical body is the center of a galaxy of subtle magnetism.

Find the sequences that work for you. Don't impose anyone else's system of body energy onto yourself. Explore and make your own map. The chakras evolve through being employed appropriately; for example, your heart chakra develops by loving people, not by being forced to open. You will learn about your own internal sequencing through love and meditation.

One of the amazing gifts of a healthy meditation practice is the ability to relax deeply into the ever-changing, unpredictable, always surprising, ecstatic flow of the life-force.



मुक्त्वा

MUKTVĀ

Muktva: Loosened up, freed, let go. Having liberated one's self, having attained final emancipation. Having put aside, excepting, except, save.

Practice

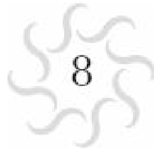
Muktva is the energy of liberation—"I want to be free! I want room to live! I want to express all the life that is in me!" This urge is a primordial force, one of the strongest impulses in a human being. If you want to thrive in yoga, connect with this unstoppable force in yourself, and let meditation be a space to let your energy run wild.

Each area of your body, each vibrating wheel of delicious energy, may have its own idea of freedom. Your sexual center may want a certain kind of contact, your solar plexus may want to feel powerful, your heart may ache to flow freely in love, and your head is concerned with its own agenda. One of the keys to a healthy meditation practice is to give yourself permission to feel all of who you are. Cherish all your instincts and emotions. As you introduce the feeling of *muktva* into your meditation, all your energy centers may start talking with each other about what they want, giving you fantasies and sensations. This is good. Enjoy the show and practice the skills of conversation. Let everyone talk and listen to each other. Consider meditation a safe place to be in conversation with your radical impulses toward freedom, whatever they are.

When you accept a wild impulse of freedom and let it permeate your body with energy, attention gets attracted toward *suksma,* the subtle dimensions of your life-force, and a vibrant serenity emerges.

Another key to freedom is to let meditation be a safe place to explore, where any and all feelings are allowed. You can let any thought or emotion come without editing it or controlling it. You don't care what thoughts come and go, and you don't try to remember them. All you need to do is make a simple decision: "I won't act on any thought or emotion that comes during meditation."

You give freedom to meditation by letting it be its own separate state of awareness, in which the body-mind system can explore new patterns of connectedness. Then, after meditation, with a clearer mind, you can make time for decisions.



पूर्य

PŪRYA

Purya: To be filled or satisfied.

Practice

In a moment of great awe or delight you may spontaneously take a deep breath and hold it. This is a portal into ecstasy. Savor the experience. Shimmering energy permeates everywhere within the skull and expands outward to dissolve into space. In such a moment the world looks illuminated. You may have a sense of stillness, of time being suspended.

You can bring a sense of delight into normal breathing by lingering for a moment at the end of an inhalation and enjoying the sensations of being filled to overflowing.

Go to places of great beauty, whatever inspires awe in you, and inhale the wonderfulness into your body. Drink it in. You can also call up a memory of natural beauty, great music, or any other situation in which you would gasp in delight. Let this reverence, this state of wonder, flood your being, fill you up to the top, and then notice the way you spontaneously breathe.



हृदय

HṚDAYA

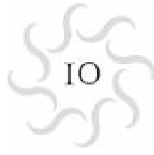
Hrdaya: Heart (or region of the heart as the seat of feelings and sensations), soul, mind (as the center of mental operations); the heart or interior of the body, the heart or center or core or essence or best or dearest or most secret part of anything. True or divine knowledge, the Veda. Science.

Practice

In this practice we are invited to enter the heart through the door of the senses. The first word of this sutra is *sikhi*, "a peacock, name of Indra, the god of love." In the tradition this text emerges from, a peacock feather is sometimes used in giving *shaktipat*, a heart-opening transmission of initiatory ecstasy. The peacock is the national bird of India, and the feathers are gorgeous. They shimmer and have multicolored circles on them. In the yoga tradition, these circles symbolize the senses, and this image suggests that we can receive a shocking transmission of divinity through any of the senses. The senses can be a pathway to the heart.

Take any sense—touch, smell, taste, hearing, vision—and meditate on it through its full range, from the obvious level of information to the space between particles. When you follow any sense into its subtlest state and beyond, you will find yourself entering the heart of space. Notice how each sense works, what aspect of the mystery of life it tells you about.

There are thousands of practices here. Track all of your senses through their full range of stunning beauty, from the outer beauty to the vibrant emptiness of their true nature. Follow the trail of that allure into the mysterious and powerful spaciousness that is the essence of matter, the heart of the matter.



पात्र

PĀTRA

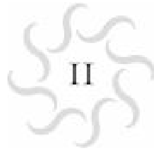
Patra: Drinking vessel, goblet, bowl, cup, dish, pot, plate, utensil, any vessel or receptacle. A meal (as placed on a dish). The channel of a river. A capable or competent person, an adept in, master of, anyone worthy or fit for our abounding in. An actor or an actor's part or character in a play. A leaf. Propriety, fitness. An order, command. A measure of capacity. A king's counselor or minister.

Practice

When you meditate, you could use any of the objects of attention mentioned in the previous nine sutras—all those breathing and kundalini techniques—or you can use any thought that crosses your mind. Any object of perception—a meal, a riverbed, a person you admire, an actor—can serve as a portal into meditation. It can serve as a mantra, a tool of thought. Whatever is attracting your interest is a channel, a river for some kind of energy to flow into the world. If you don't feel like doing an "official" practice, with breathing or mantras or energy running up the spine, just use what's in your mind.

Say you are meditating and start thinking about an actor. You may be musing on the way she channels goddess energy into the world. Your mind has not wandered; instead it is wondering —"How do I embody my own spiritual and sensual power? How can I access my full spectrum of energies so that I can work through the obstacles in my life? That actor may have kids, and yet she still shows up as a goddess. Maybe I can too, in my own way."

Welcome mind wandering and know it as part of the adventure of consciousness. Meditation is generally rhythmic: we pay attention to something for a while, then drift off and daydream, and then we wake up and re-engage with the mantra. The more you accept this cycle, the more refreshed you will be by all this inner journeying. So whenever you find yourself thinking of food, a loved one, or an actor or a character in a play, novel, movie, or television show, accept that as your mantra of the moment.



न्यास

NYĀSA

Nyasa: Putting down or in, placing, fixing, inserting, applying, impressing, drawing, painting, writing down. Depositing, entrusting, delivering. Written or literal text. Lowering (the voice). Introducing. Consigning or entrusting anything to the mind. Mental appropriation or assignment of various parts of the body to tutelary deities.

Practice

Nyasa can refer to ritual touching of various parts of the body while saying prayers or mantras. In so doing, you are awakening a quality of the divine and assigning or placing it in that area of the body. Here you are invited to introduce sacred qualities to the inside of your skull and to the crown of the skull.

It is best to start out informally. Say something like, "I want my head to be filled with the most beautiful light, gorgeous music, and a view that goes on forever." Just make it up. Don't impose anyone else's idea of the sacred on yourself. The space inside your skull can become a perfect island getaway, a concert hall, the entire range of the Himalayas, vast reaches of outer space, or a medieval church with rose windows and saints everywhere.

You don't have to stick with one thing forever. The decor inside your head can be just for today or even just for the next five minutes, and then you can redecorate. What matters is that *you* decide what you would like your inner space to be filled with—how many windows to have, how open to the outer universe you want to be.

There are several healthy qualities you develop in this way. First of all, the activity of choosing activates your mental circuits and introduces freedom; the changed elements introduce the possibility of novelty into your perception, and in selecting what you want, you can develop a combination of being at home in yourself and being on an adventure. These qualities will serve your meditation practice in the long run.

In this tradition, the skull, *kapala,* is an offering cup of brilliance dedicated to this infinite divinity in which we find ourselves.



मध्य

MADHYA

Madhya: Middle, the middle that embraces all. In the middle of the body, a woman's waist. In algebra, the middle term or the mean of progression. The middle finger. In music, a particular tone, also a kind of meter. The middle of the sky. The space between (the eyebrows). The belly, abdomen. Ten thousand billions.

Practice

This is a practice of wonder, tenderness, and connection. Explore the relationship between the earth below you, your body, and the sky above.

In nature, magnetism flows between the opposite poles. The sun and the earth are polarities; the ocean of air above and the ground below are polarities. As you learn to live your life in conscious relationship with the above and the below, your own body becomes the middle, the *madhya,* and the magnetism flows through you. Your body is a bridge, an electrical circuit joining heaven and earth. *Yukti* is "joining." A human being is something the universe created to link the below and the above.

You might take walks and open up your senses to the sky above and ground below, then lie on the earth and do the same. You could dance or practice tai chi. You could visit places with a huge sky and places where you love the earth. Over time, learn to tolerate the sense of immensity both above and below.

There is nothing to be forced. This is a love relationship. Give it time, give it flowers. Go on dates and pay attention. The text says *devya taya*—"by means of the Goddess this practice is revealed."



द्वार

DVĀRA

Dvara: Door, gate, passage, entrance. Opening, aperture (especially of the human body). A way, means, medium. The Mahesvaras hold that there are six *dvaras,* or means of obtaining religious ecstasy.

Practice

Doors can be open and they can be closed. Sometimes we long to close it all out, shut the door, and put up a sign saying, "Go away." This yukti gives you permission to do just that.

Close the outer doors of perception, *dvaras,* and open your inner senses. You can do this in any way that is attractive to you, such as wearing an eye mask and earplugs, meditating in a silent and dark room, or floating in a sensory deprivation tank. You could put your fingers over your eyes and in your ears in *shanmukhi mudra.* Most people can automatically shut out the outer world, instantly and without effort, whenever they find something interesting to attend to in the inner world.

Alternately, use your hands to lightly touch and bless the openings in the head—the ears, nose, mouth, and eyes. In your imagination, create an energy shield around the head and around your body. Wrap yourself up in protective light. "Putting on armor" is the sixth definition of *yoga* in the Monier-Williams *Sanskrit-English Dictionary.* Armor can be a prayer that gives you the ability to turn away or postpone unwanted energies. When you close the door to the outer world, there is a beautiful feeling of having just the right armor to protect your inner temple.



बिन्दु

BINDU

Bindu: A detached particle, drop, globule, dot, spot. A mark made by the teeth of a lover on the lips of his mistress. A colored mark made on the forehead between the eyebrows. A spot or mark of colored paint on the body of an elephant. The sudden development of a secondary incident (which, like a drop of oil in water, expands and furnishes an important element in the plot).

Practice

There are sudden and surprising developments in the plot of our everyday lives and in the adventure story of our inner lives. Sometimes the Goddess gives us a love bite, leaving a little *bindu* mark saying, "You are mine." In the outer world or in meditation, you may see something so beautiful that your heart is shaken (*kshobha,* "shaking"). It's a glimpse of heaven, and you are changed. You are marked by love.

You catch sight of perfection, and it stirs an inner flame, lights your fire. The sensation is almost orgasmic. The beauty out there awakens a subtle flame in your heart and mind, behind the eyes. Whenever this happens, welcome it and follow the melting into the heart. There is blessing here. Let the swoon carry you into the arms of divine consciousness. This is an initiation. The world is an open-air ashram, and the guru is everywhere. The Beloved is everywhere. The holy is here.

When you look out on the world, be alert for what lights up your eyes. The delight is a kind of disturbance; it shakes you and awakens the fire within. It lights up your eyes, lights up your heart. You melt. This simple moment, which all tenderhearted people experience, is a door to the mystery of heart. If you meditate on this flame, you may find yourself dissolving and entering the cave of the heart. One of the high purposes of meditation—*dhyanartha*—is to be prepared to savor and cherish these moments when they occur.



अनाहत

ANĀHATA

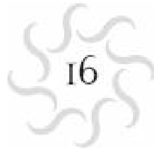
Anahata: Unbeaten, unwounded. Produced otherwise than by beating.

Practice

Whenever you can, listen to waterfalls, streams, rivers, and oceans—any flowing water. Listen from different distances so you can appreciate both the steady roar and a distant hum. Sometimes go so far away that you can barely hear it. Meditate in all these places so you will become attuned to the rushing and to the whisper. The word *anahata* suggests that you explore and find the sounds that are particularly soothing to your heart. This is a good practice in itself, and it also attunes the body to other types of flowing currents, even internal ones.

There are many rivers inside a human body, thousands of miles of blood vessels. That is just the physical level. On the level of the prana body, there is similar intricacy. This yukti invites us to listen to the flow of life within. There is a sound of your own heart center vibrating. You may hear it if you are finely tuned. It is the song of you, the vibration of you having this adventure in existence. It is always there, rushing like a river, a whisper. Once in a while you may hear it while meditating, especially in the early hours of the morning before dawn. No matter what your technique, sometimes the quiet roar will just be there. There is nothing you did that caused it. When this happens, simply listen and be with it.

Hata is a term in Indian music meaning "struck, beaten (as a drum)." In Sanskrit, when you add a short *a* to a word, it means the opposite, so *anahata* is "unstruck"—the chord that keeps resonating without beginning or end. *Anahata* is also a term used in the chakra system to refer to the heart center, the wheel of life energy vibrating in the region of the physical heart. So right here we have one of those cheerful little jokes you find everywhere in Sanskrit: hearts beat—that's what they do. And hearts get wounded. But there is a level of your heart that is unbeaten and unwounded. Any time you want, come take refuge here and be healed, in your essential heart that is steadily humming along.



प्रणव

PRANAVA

Pranava: The sacred syllable OM.

Practice

Listen to *pranava,* the hum of expansive joy permeating the universe, reverberating everywhere, including within you. The *shakti,* the divine power, will flood you with *shunya,* exquisite spaciousness.

Pranava is usually decoded as *pra* ("pre, before") plus *nava* ("shout, exult")—the shout of joy that came before everything, the primordial sound of the universe continually and ecstatically singing itself into existence.

Here are some of those stunning layers of meaning in Sanskrit. *Pranava* is the nickname of OM, and OM means "yes." The cosmic OM is Creation saying yes to itself, its ongoing expansion. The dictionary describes OM as made up of *a, u,* and *m.* Notice the sounds people make spontaneously when they are feeling "Yes!" When the life in them is saying yes to a hug, a bite of chocolate, a sip of warm soup, or the perfect piece of music for the moment, they will utter sounds such as *ahhh, oohh,* and *mmm.* How brilliant of the ancient lexicographers.

You can create a mantra by noticing what sounds you make spontaneously when the feeling of yes is rising in your body. The sounds you make in exuberance, delight, deliciousness, and expansive joy are your natural *pranava.* You want your mantra to feel like it comes from inside you and leads you there.

OM actually has many official variations. Each meditation school has its preferred way to articulate it, just as different rock bands make up their own unique sounds. *Eem* is a form of OM, as is *hum, hreem,* and simply *mmm.* If you take any vowel and add *mmm,* you have a version of OM. These *eeee* sounds have a quality of "Whee!" They are energizing.

Although we usually think of *pranava* sounds as being peaceful, don't forget the definition: a roar of joy. When people are relaxed and at ease and expressing joy, they say things like, "Oh yeah! *Hell* yeah! Amen! Ahhhh-*men!* Hallelujah!" Here is a fun exercise: Listen to twenty thousand people at a sports event, roaring at some play on the field. Hear it as a form of *pranava.*

This sutra also introduces the term *bhavana,* which has a meaning of "steeping, infusion." Soak your body in the feeling of yes, the vibration of yes, whatever that is for you. Let the hot water of your blood and your passion for life mix with your primordial yes. Meditate with that. Listen to the hum of it and follow it into the great silence.



शून्य

ŚŪNYĀ

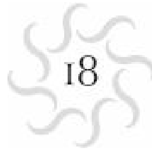
Shunya: Empty, void, hollow, barren, desolate, deserted. Absentminded, having no certain object or aim, distracted. Empty as in possessing nothing. Alone, solitary, having no friends or companions. Free from wanting, lacking, nonexistent. Vain, idle, unreal, nonsensical. Void of results, ineffectual. Bare, naked. Guileless, innocent. Space, heaven, atmosphere.

Practice

Whenever you are practicing with acoustics—with sound or mantras—the *silence* before you think or say the sound and the vibrant silence after you think or utter the sound are gateways. A mantra prepares your body and tunes your nerves so that *shunya,* the nothingness, is interesting. *Shunya* is not something your mind can grasp, since it is no-thing. The definition "bare, naked" suggests that the mind itself is naked.

As you listen to any internal music, mantras, or vowels, notice the way the vibration alters your structure, sets the web of your subtle body vibrating. There is an infinity of tiny delicious sensations—the sensuous *texture* of your inner life. *Purva* is "being before," and *anta* is "end of a texture, pause." *Texture* means "web, structure, network, weaving." As you become aware of the network of your nerves dancing in emptiness, in *shunya,* the sensation is unutterable. Even a few seconds of this can be as satisfying as an orgasm (well, almost).

The key to this practice is not correct pronunciation of a mantra; it is the urge in you to explore the play of sound and silence, how the song of your unique life manifests itself in quiet inner harmony. The ancient texts say there are tens of millions of mantras, which is a way of saying that everything you could ever utter is mantric. All mantras are to call you home into the silence and vibrant emptiness. When you find your true mantra, it may be hard to remember because it is always fading away into silence and *shunya,* nothingness, space, heaven, atmosphere. Truth is what works.



तन्त्रि

TANTRI

Tantri: The wire or string of a lute, the strings of the heart, any tubular vessel of the body, sinew, vein.

Practice

Seek out the most rapturous music you can find and listen to it on the best sound system available. Live music can have an even greater impact. Music you love will teach you things about meditation and life that you can learn in no other way. Ask around, "What is the most beautiful music in the world?" Find a way to expose yourself to it so that you can let go and be carried away. Make time to give over totally. Be stunned.

In other words, be a teenager in love with a band. In reality, what works for you could be any type of music—classical, kirtan, country, R&B, rap. What matters is you love it so much you want to dissolve into it. In a song, in the space of a few minutes, we can let go, lose ourselves, and then return, refreshed, with a deeper sense of self.

Listening to music, we ride our passions into the vibrating core of energy from which they arise. Life is rhythm, and music invites us to surrender to the rhythm of life and love. This sutra invites us to begin by listening to external music and then to follow the impulses into the inner world. People who love music already know the truth of this sutra, and they are surprised and delighted to see it affirmed in a classic yoga text.

The image in *tantri* is that of stretching cords or strings over a framework. This is the basic technology of a stringed instrument or of a weaving loom. The *tan* of *tantri* has a wide series of meanings, including "to believe in; to afflict with pain; to resound, roar; to extend, spread, be diffused as light over, shine, extend toward, reach to; to be protracted, endure; to stretch a cord, extend or bend a bow, spin out, weave." This sounds like rock and roll to me. *Tan* changed in pronunciation to *tar* is the root of *sitar* and *guitar.*

Tan generated a family of words that includes *tantra,* which has a totally mind-boggling definition:

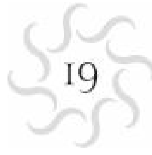
> A loom, the warp, the leading or principal or essential part, main point, characteristic feature, model, type, system, framework. A class of works in the form of dialogues between Shiva and Durga discussing 1. the creation, 2. the destruction of the world, 3. the worship of the gods, 4. the attainment of all objects, especially of six superhuman faculties, 5. the four modes of union with the supreme spirit by meditation. A spell.

> Oath or ordeal. An army. A row, number, series, troop. Government. A means which leads to two or more results, contrivance. A drug, chief remedy. Wealth. Happiness.

All these meanings can be seen as the subject of passionate music.

Whew! When you love music, you know that the vibrating strings of the instruments set your heartstrings vibrating in resonance. You know that music is the "main point" and that it is a mode of union with the spirit. You know that music is a "drug and a remedy, wealth and happiness."

What music is so ravishing that it leaves you in a stunned and pulsating silence, the "aesthetic arrest" James Joyce identified, in which your mind goes silent in awe of the presence of great beauty?



मन्त्र

MANTRA

Mantra: Instrument of thought, speech, sacred text or speech, a prayer or song of praise. A Vedic hymn. A sacred formula, mystical verse. Incantation, charm. The primary mantras being held to be seventy million in number and the secondary innumerable. A plan or design. A name of Shiva.

Practice

Play with sounds that feel like food for your ears. The verse uses the word *piṇḍa:* "Any round heap, a ball. A roundish lump of food, a bit, morsel, mouthful. Food. Daily bread, livelihood, subsistence." These metaphors point to mantras that are nutritious.

What constitutes a nutritious sound is different for each of us and may change over time. Many of the classic meditative mantras feel like sounds of nature, the hum of electricity, the *eeeemmmm* of power flowing through nerves. Other mantras feel nourishing, like food. What matters in terms of yukti, skillfulness, is finding the sounds you love so much you want to be with them. Here are some seed sounds to explore: *hring, shring, kring, hung, aing, shyam, ram, aim, kleem, lam, vam, ham.*

Read comic books and look at how they write descriptions of action sounds. Cartoon sound-effect words might seem silly, but actually they are great examples of the thrill of shouting into the universe. These loud, all-capital-letter explosions can be easily seen and felt. Sense the explosive *KABOOM! BLAM! WHUMPH!* How about that great *BOING* when a guy is eyeballing a girl, or *POW, THWIP, BONK* when there's a fight going on?

What you want to develop are the sound effects that go with your unique inner life. Life is a musical, and these are the sound effects for your meditation. You can take energy and nourishment from them.

Mantras are all around you, and whether you know it or not, you are constantly using them in everyday speech. Consonants fill our words. Sometime when you have a few seconds, explore sounds such as *Hhhhhh,* the raucous *Rrrrrrr,* and the exciting *Sssssss.* Notice if these sounds resonate with you.

It's also great fun to listen to engines revving—those of planes at airports, cars at race tracks, lawn mowers in the neighbor's driveway. Listen to bees humming in the garden or your cat purring. Listen and know that space resonates with the silent potential of all these sounds. Let yourself feed on them in the most natural and immediate way.



वियत्

VIYAT

Viyat: To dispose in various rows, arrange. To do penance. Being dissolved, passing away, vanishing. The sky, heaven, air, atmosphere. Ether (as an element). Name of the tenth mansion in astrology. A kind of meter.

Practice

Consider all directions, simultaneously, as being dissolved into sublime emptiness.

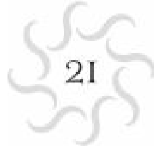
The many meanings of *viyat* suggest vanishing into thin air, perhaps accompanied by haunting and peaceful music.

You could be in any pose—sitting, standing, lying down, floating in a pool, suspended in a sensory deprivation tank—and sense all directions simultaneously.

> Above me is endless space.
> Below me is endless space.
> Behind me is endless space.
> To my left is space.
> To my right is space.
> Within me is endless space.

As the directions dissolve, so does your definition of yourself. This is exciting and freeing. If you are attracted to this exploration, start by letting yourself be with these phrases for a minute. That is enough. Maybe that minute will stretch into a few minutes. As soon as it stops feeling like a luxury, move on. Gradual is good. You might be with this thought for a minute or two every day, as part of your meditation time. Then, over weeks and months, enjoy the spaciousness you are perceiving as you move through your world. Don't do too much. Always give your senses and your sense of balance time to adapt.

When you do the proper amount of this type of meditation for your body and your lifestyle, you will feel free and have the sense of lots of space around you to move in and explore. Your sense of direction will get stronger, and you will be better at navigating in the world. It is as if you rebooted your whole relationship with space. If you do too much, you can get spaced out, as they say. Always fine-tune your practice so that you function better in your daily life.



पृष्ट

PṚṢṬHA

Prishtha: Standing forth prominently. The back as a prominent part of an animal, the hinder or rear part of anything. To carry on the back. The upper side, the roof of a house, the vault of heaven. A page of a book. The back of the body, the spinal column.

Practice

When you look up at the night sky and see an arc of stars stretching from horizon to horizon, that is the vault of heaven. *Prishtha* suggests that you perceive your spine with the same sense of wonder, as if you are gazing into space. Each vertebra is a celestial sphere, made of emptiness and stars.

A simple movement meditation with *prishtha* is to get on your hands and knees and explore gentle curving motions with your spine. Imagine each vertebra is an area of the sky, with a few stars. Continue to undulate gently and get used to space above you, space below you, space within you, spaciousness permeating the whole area of your back.



स्थिर

STHIRA

Sthira: Firm, hard, solid, compact, strong. Fixed, immovable, motionless, still, calm. Not wavering or tottering, steady. Unfluctuating. Taking courage. Kept secret. Faithful, trustworthy. Firmly resolved to. Settled, ascertained, undoubted, sure, certain. A kind of meter. A name of Shiva. Certain zodiacal signs. The earth.

Practice

Take courage *(sthira),* take heart *(hṛd)* that you are permeated with infinite space everywhere and you still exist. Get interested in the sense of spacious freedom permeating your spine, the area between your legs, and your heart. As you enter this feeling, find your way into steadiness.

This is a *shunya* meditation, inviting you to firmly sit down on nothing; you are emptiness sitting, standing, or lying down on emptiness. The back is space. The area between your legs is flooded with space. The heart pulsates in spaciousness. Cultivate this feeling steadily, firmly.

Develop these experiences, then meditate on them simultaneously *(yugapad).* As you develop the ability to perceive your heart and spine as space and to be with them as space, allow also the coexistence of both empty space and the appearance of matter. You don't need to deny the solid nature of your spine; you are just contemplating that everything is made out of emptiness. A beautiful, clear feeling arises as a result.



निर्विकल्प

NIRVIKALPA

Nirvikalpa: Not admitting an alternative; free from change or differences. Admitting no doubt, not wavering. Free from thoughts.

Practice

The yukti here is simple and direct: if even for just a moment you experience the body as free and open space, you become free.

For example, put your arm out in front of you, and then take a full five minutes to bring your hand to touch your heart. Slow, subtle movement, if you choose it, can be so interesting that your mind becomes free of thought. The word used for this lack of thought is *shunya,* which means, among other things, "empty, void, hollow, nonexistent; bare, naked; space, heaven, atmosphere."

This sense of *shunya* can happen at times of transition, such as falling asleep or waking from a nap, getting out of the shower—anytime. It can happen in between any two thoughts. Enter the space between thoughts and experience your body as a void. In that brief moment, you will become free, one with your original form, your *svarupa.*

One day I was sitting on the sofa meditating and idly wondering about this verse. Then suddenly I was inside the experience it is referring to. In a moment, I dissolved into void-space-heaven. It felt heavenly and totally normal. I was at home in the universe. Then I beamed into being myself again, back into my body, feeling very refreshed. Somehow, wondering about this sutra and thinking it in Sanskrit took me right inside. I needed access to this freedom.

Entering the space between thoughts can occur at almost any time, spontaneously, in moments of grace, beauty, or love, but also in times of loss and shock. We go there any time we need to renew ourselves in our essence.



भावन

BHĀVANA

Bhavana: Demonstration, argument, ascertainment. Feeling of devotion, faith in. Reflection, contemplation. Saturating any powder with fluid, steeping, infusion. In arithmetic, finding by combination or composition. The moral of a fable.

Practice

Bhavana has the remarkable meaning of "infusion"—as when you are making tea, infusing an herb in alcohol, making a medicine to drink, or soaking yourself in a quality you love and need. To practice a *bhavana* meditation, think of a quality you would love to be permeated by, and soak in it.

Steeping, infusion—you can think of this in various ways. One is making tea or coffee. You have some quality you want, the tea leaves or the ground coffee, and you mix it with water and let it sit. Voila, you have something new—not just plain water and not dry leaves or beans, but this magical drink. Sometimes we do this process just for joy. Infusion also has a medicinal aspect; we can infuse special herbs with water and make a tea that balances our body energies. And infusion has a meaning of "continuous slow introduction of a solution into the body." There is a quality you need or crave, and by meditating on it, you slowly, gently, continuously introduce it into the body and introduce your body to it.

Let's go over the instructions for a *bhavana* meditation again.

First, think of one, two, or three qualities you would love to be infused with. Ask within yourself, "What would I love to be filled with? What kind of energy? What quality of being?" You could write these words in your journal. Your words might be quite different from one another, such as *power, peace, love* or *excitement, stability, clarity.*

Second, give yourself a chance to love each word, leisurely. Bond with the word; let your body be at home with it.

Third, develop a rhythm of leisurely thinking of each word and then pausing to feel it resonating in you. Like when you drop a pebble into a pond, watch the ripples. You might think one of your words every ten or twenty seconds, so it takes a full minute to think all three.

Get used to this rhythm: the word, the feeling of the word, the sensations and imagery, the silence after the word, then the next word.

You can meditate in this way for five, ten, or twenty minutes a day. That's it. You're all set. You can do this with any quality you love or are devoted to or have faith in.



त्वच्

TVAC

Tvac: To cover. Skin, hide. A cow's hide used in pressing out the *soma.* A leather bag. Bark, rind, peel. Cinnamon. A cover (of a horse). Surface (of the earth). A mystical name of the letter *ya.*

Practice

This yukti explores the mystery of skin. There are several phases to the practice. To begin, simply dwell with the feeling that within the skin is vastness. Or, if you prefer, within the covering is nothing. After a while, something surprising happens—the dual perception of boundaries and spaciousness releases your senses to perceive reality at a deeper level, and this shift of perception stimulates changes in your internal chemistry. The senses get so happy to be doing what they are built for, their higher purpose, that they set in motion the manufacture of your own happy hormones.

Note that *tvac* refers to the "skin used in creating *soma,*" the ambrosia of life. In ancient texts, *soma* is the mythical psychedelic plant infusion that gave the ancient yogis the ability to hear the mantras resonating in eternity. *Soma* is "juice, extract, especially the juice of the soma plant, offered in libations to the gods." This juice was collected by moonlight on certain mountains. *Soma's* other meanings include "the moon; nectar; heaven, sky, ethers; a drug of supposed magical properties."

Translated into the here and now, from the mythic to the somatic, the *soma* spoken of in this sutra refers to the process by which the body produces its own molecules of delight, which we might call endorphins. In the meditation tradition, *soma* refers to the body's natural nectars that enhance perception. In this one little word, *tvac,* we see a hint at one of the central aims of this yoga, which is to stay juicy. These 112 practices open perception in a way that creates joy at being alive, at even the simplest things in life, and this deep appreciation tunes the body so it can produce *soma,* the intrinsic chemistry of delight.

This is the way *soma* was explained to me when I was a teenager and first learning about Kashmir Shaivism. When I meditate in this way, inside is all free and open space, and the world outside looks like gorgeous art, luminous and ever changing.



सम्पुट

SAMPUṬA

Samputa: A hemispherical bowl or anything so shaped. The space between two bowls. A round covered case or box (for jewelry). A hemisphere. The kurabaka flower. A kind of sex. Credit, balance.

Practice

Do whatever makes your heart sing, then listen in. What you hear is the primordial mantra, and it is a portal to your inner world. *Samputa* evokes the image of the heart as an infinite singing bowl. The word also points to the resonating space between two bowls—between two hearts, two chakras, two bodies. In tantra, *samputa* can refer to containing or covering the jewel of one mantra with another, for example *Om Hrim Om. Aha* would be a good covering mantra, because it is a palindrome. *Aha Shiva Aha* would be a *samputa* mantra.

Samputa also refers to a series of poses in the yoga of sex. Shiva is saying to Shakti, "Under the bowl of the infinite sky, let us make love. I am infinite consciousness; you are divine creative energy. Let us lie together and move through the *samputa* poses, sharing our secrets of love. May the delight-filled Goddess energy join with the infinite I-AM consciousness, as equals."

In this yukti, the aspect of you that is Shakti, the vibrant energy of life, is lying with her lover, Shiva, who is your essential consciousness, and magnetism is flowing between these polarities. *Samputa* is also "the space between"—the space between jewel boxes—and this space is lush with juicy, flowing energy that hums with an ecstasy about to gush forth. The ecstatic magnetism flowing between the Goddess and her Beloved gives rise to mantras.

Samputa suggests that mantras emerge spontaneously from the vibrancy of the relationship of energy and consciousness. Listen to the mantra of the heart as if it is emerging from the sigh of lovers: *ohhhh . . . mmmmm . . . ahhhhh.* You might also hear a humming sound, like that of bees. The kurabaka flower is referred to in Sanskrit love poetry as "rich in nectar and a lure for bees," who excite the air with their humming.

The verse begins with *hrdya,* "being in the heart, inward, pleasing to the heart, beloved, cherished, savory food that makes your stomach happy, a delicious liquor made from honey." In the heart you are free; there is open space, *akasha.* The *samputa* mantra resonating here creates a delicious liquor; drink and be refreshed. Allow your attention to alight here, as lightly *(nili)* as a bird settles on a tree. Follow any impulse of cherishing inward to the heart and rest in the vast spaciousness of what the heart is. Meditate on the current of love itself and let it call you home.

Anything that has ever pleased your heart can be your guide. All that you adore, all that is

nourishing to the heart, all that has ever made you feel like you are drinking the sweet honey nectar of life, is always here in your heart. Come rest in this splendor.



मनोलय

MANOLAYA

Manolaya: Loss of awareness due to total mental absorption. *Manas:* mind (in its widest sense). *Laya:* The act of sticking or clinging to. To become attached to anyone, to disappear, to be dissolved or absorbed. Lying down. Melting, absorption in. Rest, repose. Place of rest, residence, house. Sport, diversion, merriness. Delight in anything. An embrace. In music, time. A kind of measure. The union of song, dance, and instrumental music. A pause. A swoon.

Practice

There are sweet spots everywhere in the body—areas the mind *(manas)* loves to melt into and delight in *(laya).* If we take the definition of *laya,* above, and unfold it a bit, we hear something like the following: "If you follow the pendulum of the breath from its highest point, where it swings up into the head, to its lowest point, where it swings down into the vibrating area between the legs, you will find many places of rest—residences and houses for your attention to dwell. These places invite you to enter and be in enjoyment. The atmosphere is alive with music and dance."

Run your hands over your body and explore the places that feel like the union of song and dance—luxurious areas you want to linger in. Be sure to include the arms, hands, legs, and feet. Go get massage from a really skilled person and then meditate afterwards and chart your whole body. Do things that make you feel fantastic, and when in the height of feeling wonderful, sit down and meditate and sense where the energies are dancing. In lovemaking, notice the areas of heightened sensation where awareness is intensified. If you study the chakras, keep in mind that those are someone else's maps of their body, a little sketch of some moment of their life. That's their song and dance. What's yours?

If you feel called to lie down, swoon, melt into pleasure, then *laya* is working for you. The chakras are entertaining places to rest and sport with the energies of life and love. When you find an area you are called to embrace, give over to the sensations, memorize the inner dance of energy, and listen to the quiet inner music.



क्षिप्

KṢIP

Ksip: To throw, cast, send, dispatch, to move hastily (the arms or legs), to throw a glance (as the eye). To direct the thoughts upon, to throw away, cast away, get rid of, to utter abusive words, insult, to throw into, to cause to descend into.

Practice

Select one of the delight-filled centers in the body and learn to be "centered" there as you live your life. This yukti is a continuation of the previous one, 27.

First you may want to explore your chosen center only during meditation (or lovemaking or dancing or music). After a while, you may begin to feel at home in yourself and realize, "Oh, this is my residence—one of my many residences—and it's good to be here." After you stabilize in this perception, begin to explore being poised in that area as you move through your day. Practice being in yourself and "centered" while doing chores, working, talking, and loving people.

Yukti means "skillful," and if you do this yukti skillfully, you will function better and have *more* attention for the outer world, even though you are also attending to your inner delight. *Ksip* is almost a physical skill and can be approached playfully—*throwing* your attention, again and again, into your body, the way you would throw a baseball or football to a partner. Through practice you develop elegance, grace, and effortlessness.

When you are in a sweet relationship with your chakras, you can turn to your essence in a moment then come back to the outer world without losing track of anything. You have more presence because you are continually refreshed in the stream of prana flowing through you.



अग्नि

AGNI

Agni: Fire, sacrificial fire (of three kinds: *garhapatya, ahavaniya*, and *daksina*). The number three. The god of fire. The fire of the stomach, digestive faculty, gastric fluid. Bile. Gold.

Practice

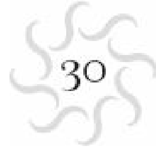
The yukti here is the relationship of the body and flame.

It helps to know that biological life is fire. Our bodies burn at almost a hundred degrees, night and day, even if the environment is cool. Each cell is a little flame, a tiny hearth cooking up the sustenance of life and transmuting the elements into energy. The process of transmutation is called fire. The sun is fire. Our bodies are fire. The sun shines on the oceans, forests, and farms, and the fiery sunshine is absorbed by the plants through the magic of photosynthesis. When we eat the plants or something that eats plants, we absorb this energy and turn it into heat and energy to move with, in a continual dance.

Get into this practice very gently, tiny step by tiny step. If you like candles, spend a few minutes appreciating one. If you like the warmth of the sun on your skin on a winter afternoon, cherish that. If you have access to a fireplace, make yourself cozy, watch the flickers, listen to the crackles, and absorb the warmth. Over a period of months, become intimate with flame as it relates to your body.

I took several months getting to know this sutra, phrase by phrase, then memorized the first paragraph, "I am immersed in the flame . . . ," as my mantra. I let the words and the images and sensations they invoked roll through me, very slowly, in meditation for half an hour, morning and evening.

If you are called to this practice today, the flame of the soul is already here. It is a relief to snuggle up with it. This is a chance to rest, be at peace with, and inspired by the flame of life.



अनन्यचेतस्

ANANYACETAS

Ananyacetas: Giving one's undivided thought to.

Practice

This is a flame meditation in which you recognize that the universe is made out of flame and always at play. If you are called to this meditation, you have a relationship with the sacred flame, and your awareness longs to merge with it.

In Sanskrit, this merging is *ananyacetas.* Your intelligence, *cetas,* is made of brilliance and revels in the universal fire. The Self recognizes its own elemental nature. We don't usually experience this cosmic reality in our bodies; our awareness is encrusted with accumulated worries about our place in the world. Thus, we develop a craving for radical freedom. In this meditation you are not praying that everything be destroyed; you are releasing your awareness into the realm of pure splendor. This is akin to meditating on being made up of molecules, atoms, and subatomic particles. It's intense yet relaxing.

Every particle of creation is aflame, a tiny sun. Everyone and everything is already one with God. Nineteenth-century Anglican minister John Henry Newman said, "Heaven and hell are the same place. It's just that in hell people resist the flame." It can be an extraordinary relief to sense that the universe is aflame. Get someone to explain a bit of astrophysics to you, so you can grasp that the matter in your body, all around you, everything you have ever touched or eaten, was once part of a sun.



पर

PARA

Para: Far, distant, remote (in space), opposite, ulterior, farther than, beyond, on the other or farther side of, extreme, previous (in time), former. Ancient, past. Later, future, next. Following, succeeding, subsequent. Final, last. The Supreme or Absolute Being, the Universal Soul. The highest point or degree. The wider or more extended meaning of a word.

Practice

Wonder and awe are power sources propelling this practice. What is the world made out of? What is my body made out of? The technique is to take any element of your body and develop a subtler and subtler *(suksma-suksma)* appreciation of all its levels, until you perceive its foundation, its ultimate reality *(para),* the source of existence.

You can use any schema of the basic constituents of the universe that attracts you—the elements of the periodic table; the Aristotelian forms of earth, air, fire and water; the five elements of Chinese qigong, earth, metal, water, wood, and fire; the Buddhist great elements or *Mahabhutas;* or the *tattva* ("thatness") of Shaivism or Samkhya. Or you could make up your own system. Whatever element attracts you becomes your mantra, your tool of thought.

One of the skills here is to find what fascinates you so deeply that you want to go in and spend time meditating in this way. When you discover an element that intrigues you, engage with it using all your senses and instincts. If you suddenly fall in love with the element of water, pay special attention when drinking anything, bathing, walking in the rain, watering the plants, or swimming. Take a hot bath and notice that there is water outside your body, while inside your body you are about 75 percent water. You could take your blood pressure and marvel that a fluid is circulating within your body. Notice what thirst is and develop a taste for simple, pure water. This practice is endless, because we have so many senses with which to see, smell, taste, touch, and hear the elements. We are not only built out of the elements, but we are also designed to love them. The particular sensory aspects of the elements we are attracted to are as unique to us as our voices and eyes.

Para is the Universal Soul, and in practicing this yukti, you are asking Her to take you into her kitchen and let you see how bodies and planets are whipped up out of nothing, following the Cookbook of Creation.



स्वतन्त्र

SVATANTRA

Svatantra: Independence, self-will, freedom, one's own system or school, one's own army, free, uncontrolled, full grown. *Tantra:* A loom. Metaphorically, a framework or network of interconnected threads. A system. From the root *tan:* to extend, spread, be diffused (as light) over, shine, extend towards, reach to, to stretch (a cord).

Practice

With an external practice such as asana, you can imitate someone else. You can watch the teacher do a pose and follow along. With the internal aspects of yoga, such as meditation, there is no way to imitate anyone else. We can't see what someone is doing if they are sitting there with their eyes closed. Meditation is internal yoga, just you and infinity. What actually happens inside you is unique to you. So with meditation, you need to begin with *svatantra,* freedom and independence, or else you will not end up there. You have to feel your way and follow your inner call right from the beginning.

In meditation, whenever you sense restriction, be alert to the possibility that the technique you are practicing does not suit your essence. Perhaps you are imprisoning yourself in the name of discipline. Your longing for freedom is one of the most powerful forces in your being. Yoga emerges from this longing. When you feel like quitting a specific practice or discipline, it is not failure. That system may have worked to get you through a certain phase of your life. But you have outgrown it and are now being called to a deeper discipline, one more in accord with your true nature. Your yoga is evolving into a new form, which may be unknown to you for a while.

When you graduate from a school, celebrate. The Vijnana Bhairava Tantra makes it clear that when you integrate one particular yukti and are ready to move on, another is calling you. Give yourself time to explore the practice that suits your life now and helps you to thrive in your inner and outer worlds.



भुवन

BHUVANA

Bhuvana: A being, living creature, man, mankind. The world, earth. All three worlds—earth, hell, and heaven, or earth, psychic, and spiritual. Place of being, abode, residence. A house. Causing to exist.

Practice

This practice is a path of wonder, in which we allow our loving attention to engage with the inquiry, how did the universe—all these people, planets, and stars—get here? What course is the universe following? *Adhva* is "road, way, orbit, journey, distance, time, method, the zodiac," suggesting you consider the revolution of planets around stars, the revolution of galaxies around their cores, and the nature of space and time.

Wonder invites attention toward the subtle, the world beyond the world. This verse uses the phrase *sthula-suksma,* "gross to subtle." Attend first to the obvious level and then allow awareness to be called into layer after subtle layer of this magical dance until you dissolve into infinity. Follow each perception from *sthula,* the massive, dense level, to the *suksma* level, the atomic. Then go beyond into *para,* that which is beyond—the infinite mystery out of which we have emerged.

Don't be surprised if your mind dissolves in awe after fifteen seconds. The mind is fast. Your natural speed might be such that once you begin to consider the multiple levels of this dancing universe, your mind might go silent in wonder within a few seconds. In a minute, you might cycle from contemplating the whole universe, to silent awe, and back again several times.



समन्त

SAMANTA

Samanta: Having the ends together, contiguous, neighboring, adjacent, being on every side, universal, whole, entire, all, on all sides, around.

Practice

In the course of a day, in our ordinary awareness, we forget the grandeur of the cosmos as we focus on the local. At any moment we can remember the immensity we are part of. In this practice we are invited to inhabit that simple truth: the universe is extending in all directions. Your body is the center, and above, below, to all sides, the majestic play of space and energy stretches out forever.

You may already sense infinity all around you and be slightly terrified by the vastness. This terror (*jagadbhaya,* "terror of the universe") is natural and is one of the doorways into ecstasy (*dvara,* "door, gate, passage, opening, way, means, means of entering ecstasy"). You may be able to tolerate it for only a few breaths at a time. It is a very odd sensation to be standing in your garden or on a mountain and experience the earth beneath you as translucent, a little grain of sand floating in a boundless ocean. If you had the resources, you could build a room in which the floors, walls, and ceiling are monitors showing movies of vast reaches of interstellar space with star systems and constellations, worlds upon worlds.

One of the skills involved in this practice is developing spherical awareness. Before and after meditation, stand and look in every direction. Extend your arms and move them as far in every direction as they can go. Now close your eyes and continue, sensing the nature of space all around you. In this way you gradually develop global, multidirectional awareness. As you get used to this, add multisensory awareness, in which you see, hear, and feel in all directions. When you meditate with spherical awareness, great brilliance arises.

If you want to develop a verbal mantra to go with this meditation, it could be something like this: *In all directions, relatedness. In all directions, intimacy. In all directions, belonging.*

If you enjoy spiritual language, you could formulate a thought such as, *The endless divine mystery is extending around me in all directions* or *On every side of me is infinite God consciousness.* Modify the phrase to be something meaningful to you. *Samanta* is a beautiful mantra to go with this meditation and sums up all of the above.

Another word in this sutra is *maha,* "great, strong, abundant, a feast, a festival, the festival of spring." One of the side effects of this practice is that the world begins to seem like a festival. So take someone to lunch. Make dinner for a group of friends. If you are alone on retreat, feed the birds.



विचिन्त्

VICINT

Vicint: To perceive, discern, observe, to think of, reflect upon, ponder, consider, regard, mind, care for. To find out, devise, investigate. To fancy, imagine.

Practice

Breathe with all the meanings of this word *vicint* for a few minutes to open the space for your meditation. Perceive, discern, observe, reflect, consider, regard, care for, find out, devise, investigate, imagine. Here is a whole set of nuances to attention that are as distinct as different asanas.

Each term used in the definition suggests a different style of attention, a particular craft-skill in your internal yoga. In any given moment, the quality of attention life asks of you may change—from discerning to pondering, from considering to caring for, from investigating to fancying, from reflecting to imagining. Each of these is actually a very different posture or asana for tending to your inner and outer world.

An overall skill of meditation is allowing each surprising moment of your experience to invoke just the right quality of engagement. You may find yourself flowing from tending with adoration to studying carefully, then going off into flights of fancy—all in the space of a minute. This supple motion of awareness is how you let the process of meditating be so interesting that you become absorbed. The text uses the word *laya,* "absorbed, dissolved, sport, diversion, merriness, delight in anything."



दृष्टि

DṚṢṬI

Drishti: Seeing, viewing, beholding (also with the mental eye). Sight, the faculty of seeing. The mind's eye. Wisdom, intelligence. Regard, consideration. View, notion. Theory, doctrine, system. Eye, look, glance. The pupil of the eye. Aspect of stars.

Practice

Whenever you have time and the inclination, throw your awareness into empty spaces, into any container—a pot, a room, or a huge meeting hall, any interesting space with sides or walls. If you want to go on an outer expedition, visit all kinds of spaces and sacred places, temples, and cathedrals.

Be prepared to catch what happens in the twinkling of an eye. Notice what happens in an instant. There is a momentary dissolution, a quiet dissolving into space, then in the next moment you come back to yourself.

People who work with spaces as their craft are natural yogis in their own way and often are happy to share their perceptions. Go talk to potters; learn how they see the inside of pots. Talk to architects and walk around a room with them; they shape matter to make space. Find whoever designed a temple and listen to them talk about the space. Interview an acoustic engineer who designs auditoriums. Seeing is beholding.



वृत्

VṚT

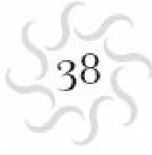
Vrt: Surrounding, enclosing, obstructing. A troop of followers. To turn, turn round, revolve, roll (also applied to the rolling down of tears). To move or go on, get along. To pass away the time. To be intent on, attend to. To have illicit intercourse with. To cause to turn or revolve, whirl, wave, hurl.

Practice

The definitions of *vrt* make my head spin. *Vrt* is the root of *vrtti*, a term often used in yoga to indicate whirlpools, mental vortexes. *Vrtti* has additional meanings pertaining to addition and occupation, working, practice, business, livelihood, and wages. *Vrtti* is also defined as the final rhythm of a verse, a commentary, comment, gloss, explanation (especially of a sutra).

The sutra suggests you go to a place *(desa)* where there are no trees, no hills, no walls, and with open eyes, gaze at nothing. Behold that wide-open space. Throw your attention into that spaciousness. As your mind dissolves in emptiness, your addictions, preoccupations, mental whirlpools—the vortexes *(vrtti)*—will gradually diminish. No matter how many times the *vrttis* intrude, return again and again to the simple beauty of bareness.

This practice is especially valuable when you are besieged by repetitive thoughts or worries, by old thinking that creates suffering. You can take a mental vacation and visualize a wide-open, boundaryless space. Sometimes there is nothing like actually going to such a place and spending a week just letting your mind empty itself out.



प्रकाश

PRAKĀŚA

Prakasha: Visible, shining, bright. Clear, manifest, open, public. Pronouncing a name out loud. Expanded. Universally noted, famous, celebrated for. Renowned throughout. Openly, publicly, before the eyes of all. Clearness, brightness, splendor, luster, light. Elucidation, explanation. Appearance, display. Manifestation, expansion, diffusion. Publicity, fame, renown, glory. Sunshine, open spot or air. The gloss on the upper part of a (horse's) body. The messengers of Vishnu. Laughter.

Practice

Prakasha makes me laugh. When the space between any two perceptions, thoughts, or objects starts shining forth, it is kind of a joke. One moment, space is just there, hiding out in the open, "No one can see me." Then, with the magic of attention, the space in between becomes bright with interaction.

The mantra (tool of thought) in this practice is the space between any two somethings—two breaths, two clouds, two mountains, two trees, two boxers in the ring, two teams on the field. In lovemaking, it is the space between two bodies, between two breasts. In a conversation, it is the space between two people.

At first, the middle space may feel like nothing. But as your awareness shifts levels toward the subtle, the space between begins to seem like the most dynamic thing happening, a magnetic field. When you get this, the invisible somehow becomes illumined and richly textured, and this is such a wonderful surprise that you may burst out laughing.



निरुद्ध

NIRUDDHA

Niruddha: Held back, withheld, held fast, stopped, shut, closed, confined, restrained, checked, kept off, removed, suppressed. Covered, veiled.

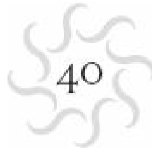
Practice

Focusing is easy when you are in love. When we are devoted to someone, we focus on them naturally and close ourselves off *(niruddha)* to other affections. For this practice, select something you are so interested in that you can pay attention to it forever—something you love so much you are willing to give up everything else to be with it (*tyakta,* "left, abandoned"). Immersed in this love, witness the blossoming of deep meditation, *bhavana.* Keep cultivating your interest; become more and more intimate with this one person, animal, object, art, or skill.

A universe of skills is required if we are to stay in love. *Niruddha* itself requires a light touch; restraint easily becomes suppression, and suddenly love feels like bondage. Yet not having enough restraint can endanger your primary relationship; a great love may light you up so much that you feel you can love the whole human race. Love wants to spill over, gush. But you can't share your love physically with everyone because there isn't enough time or space or condoms. We have to explore and find the right kind of restraint for each moment, each day. This skill set is ever changing, applying the exact nuance of holding and freedom appropriate in each heartbeat.

Niruddha is saying, "Be loyal to your love. Keep on going deeper with this *one.*" That one baby, cat, dog, horse, woman, painting, piece of music, or garden contains the essence of the cosmos. One of the great gifts of meditation, where meditation and love intersect, is that meditation is an act of paying attention. As our attention grows stronger and deeper, we become more capable of staying interested in one person. They are new and surprising in every moment.

When we bond with another person, with an animal, with family or a team, it is as if there are invisible strings connecting us with them. Each string is a nerve connection, a living current of prana. Whenever we are working with strings, we are in the realm of tantra, in its sense of weaving together the strings of life into a fabric. Cherish these connections. The sacred function of *niruddha* is not to block out the world, but to free you to attend to love.



देह

DEHA

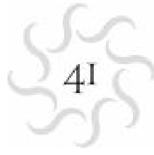
Deha: The body. (From the root *dih,* to plaster, mold, fashion.) Form, shape, mass, bulk (as of a cloud). Person, individual. Appearance, manifestation, having the appearance of.

Practice

Meditate simultaneously on the universe and your body *(deha)* as being pure consciousness.

Deha suggests appearance. We look as if we are solid and made out of matter, yet we know from science that matter is made of energy and is almost entirely space. Somehow our bodies are fashioned out of energy and space. In this meditation, you accept something deeper—that the matter of your body and the entire universe are made not just of energy and space, but on a deeper level, of pure consciousness.

When you dive into this meditation, you are not a generic person taking a snapshot of generic space. Each camera and each lens takes a somewhat different picture. Each photographer has a different eye. Each of the bus-sized telescopes orbiting the earth reveals a different aspect of the immense cosmos we inhabit. You have a somewhat different set of life experiences than anyone else who has ever lived, and when you meditate upon your body and the whole universe as being made of consciousness, there will be nuances you perceive that may not have been known before. Even if your form is only as lasting as a cloud, well, so too is a galaxy just a cloud of stars.



वायु

VĀYU

Vayu: Wind, air (as one of the five elements); breathing, breath. A mystical name of the letter *ya.* In medicine, the windy humor. In yoga, refers to *prana, apana, samana, udana, vyana.* In astronomy, the name of the fourth *muhurta* (a moment, forty-eight minutes, the thirtieth part of a day). The god of the wind, said to have sprung from the breath of *purusa;* he is said to move in a shining car drawn by a pair of red or purple horses or by several teams consisting of ninety-nine or a hundred or even a thousand horses; he is often made to occupy the same chariot with Indra and, in conjunction with him, honored with the first draught of the *soma* libation. *Vayu* is rarely connected with the *maruts,* although he is said to have begotten them from the rivers of heaven. Desirous, covetous, greedy, desirable, desired by the appetite.

Practice

It is impossible to be appreciative enough of breathing. In the definitions above, each word and image points to something exciting and magical. A thousand red or purple horses pulling a shining car—what an image for the dynamic power of breath and the blood vessels that meet the air as we breathe in. The greatest skill you could bring to breathing is being in awe and wonder. Some time, you might want to take a year and track all the metaphors associated with *vayu;* make your own imagery, so that when you think or say the word, you perceive a rich mandala of meaning.

Vayu also means "desired by the appetite," and this meaning points to life itself as driving our practice. Life's hunger for prana, for air, is what gives power to this practice.



आनन्द

ĀNANDA

Ananda: Happiness, joy, enjoyment, sensual pleasure, the thing wished for, the end of the drama.

Practice

There is a universe of practices encoded in the thirty-two syllables of this sutra. Notice that *ananda* is used twice, to emphasize that sensual pleasure and happiness are essential. Here are a couple of mantras you can play with as a way in:

> *Sva ananda bharitam:* "I am nourished and filled with the bliss of my soul."
> *Sva amritam:* "I am suffused with the nectar-essence of life."

The verse also uses the word *amrta (amrita):* "Not dead. Immortal. Imperishable. Beautiful, beloved. An immortal. A god. Name of Shiva. The plant *Phaseolus trilobus.* The nectar (conferring immortality, produced at the churning of the ocean), ambrosia. Nectar-like food. An antidote against poison. Medicament in general. The residue of a sacrifice. Anything sweet. A pear. A ray of light. Name of a meter."

You could begin meditating with the *amrita* that permeates your body—*sva amrita*—and as you shift levels, you accept that the entire universe is filled with your joy and your essence. Or you could meditate on the cosmos and your body simultaneously as being filled with your *ananda* and *amrita.*

Bliss is a necessary foundation for yoga practice. Without it, the electricity of the life-force can grate on your nerves. Bliss is nourishing, and it suffuses, lubricates, and coats the nerves with the deep pleasure of existence. When you find bliss, notice and welcome it. Do not let any voices tell you that feeling pure joy is not a serious meditation practice. Bask in pleasure, shamelessly.

Amrita is also "an antidote against poison, a medicine." If you have ever gotten involved in service, working in the harsh, broken places in the world, you may need to get away and bathe in your own *ananda* and *amrita* for sustained periods to counteract any poison you have been exposed to. *Amrita* and *ananda* nourish and heal every cell of the body and sustain the heart as we live in the world.



कुह्

KUH

Kuh: To surprise or astonish or cheat by trickery or jugglery.

Practice

Life is full of surprises, and one of the sacred functions of meditation is preparing us to be poised and ready to laugh, especially when the joke is on us.

During meditation, welcome surprise, however it shows up—in thoughts, shifts of mood, or changes in your state of consciousness. Welcome the sense that you have no idea what is going to happen next in your practice. You could be feeling bubbly and energized and suddenly fall asleep. You might think you are sleepy and sit to meditate, and somehow you instantly feel energized. Before a meditation session, you might think you are in a dull and stupid place, and yet when you close your eyes, suddenly you are full of sunshine inside, and you feel wonderful. Accept that you have no idea which item of your to-do list will demand your attention. Your brain has eighty billion neurons, and they are all talking to each other. Your body has tens of thousands of miles of nerves and blood vessels, and they want a chance to commune with each other. When you welcome surprise, you are more likely to perceive the magic show that is our every living moment.

And who knows? The universe, they say, popped out of nothingness. That is what magicians are telling us as they pull rabbits out of hats. We love being astonished. Joy rises in us when we accept the surprising nature of reality.

Say you are at an outdoor wedding, where everyone is dressed up, the women have done their hair, and suddenly a rainstorm blows in and drenches everyone. That is one of nature's tricks. There is nothing to do but laugh. Welcome the laughter as a gift of the divine.



स्रोतस्

SROTAS

Srotas: The current or bed of a river, a stream, torrent. Water. Rush, violent motion or onset of. The course or current of nutriment in the body, channel or course for conveying food. An aperture in the human or animal body (said to be nine in men and eleven in women). The spout of a jar, an organ of sense. Lineage, pedigree.

Practice

Prana is breath, life, vitality; *shakti* is power, energy, skill. This is a meditation on the power of life flowing everywhere in the body and through the channels of perception. When you understand that *pranashakti* is singing to you through all your senses, you will be filled with transcendental happiness.

Srotas is "current"—currents of *pranashakti* or life power flowing through the body and streams of sensuous perception. The stream can be quiet or rushing and violent. The focus here is on quiet perception. Learn to be alert for these tiny sensations of the *pranashakti,* as subtle as an ant walking on your skin, flowing through your senses.

Srotas is also the flow of sensory nutrition; the sensual data flowing into your awareness is nourishing. If you don't know how to receive nutrition from simple sensuous experiences such as listening to music, working in a garden, watching a baby sleep, or looking at art, go find people who do and spend time with them. There are people everywhere in the world, on every block, in every occupation, who know this secret. They have nothing to do with yoga or meditation; they don't really need to, because they already know, inherently, how to practice this sutra.



युज्

YUJ

Yuj: To yoke or join or fasten or harness (horses or a chariot). To make ready, prepare, arrange, set to work, use, employ, apply. To equip (an army). To put arrows on a bowstring. To fix in, insert, inject (semen). To turn or direct or fix or concentrate (the mind, thoughts) upon. To recollect, recall. To join one's self to. To be united in marriage. In astronomy, to come into conjunction with. To encompass, embrace. Exciting, an exciter. Being in couples or pairs.

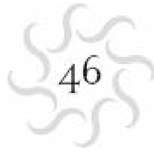
Practice

Yuj is the root of both *yoga* and *yukti* and has a similar semantic range. *Yuj* refers to all kinds of joining, including sex. In the embrace of exciting sex, we can feel like we are made out of happiness. We are in union with a flow of brilliant inner energy, and we are sharing it. We want to cherish every moment, to the last drop.

In this meditation, you enter the fire of desire and prolong the experience of lust. As you join with your lover, throw your awareness *(ksịpet)* right into the middle of sexual arousal, into the incredible joy, power, and fire of desire.

Making love is the highest form of yoga—and the most demanding. You are called to bring every molecule of awareness and skill to each moment and be ready for anything. You need to attend simultaneously to the energies of your own body and of your lover's. You have to be aware of every nerve that tingles in your body and in your lover's and to sense what is needed—what embrace and quality of touch to give.

The first word of the sutra, *vahni,* implies that our sexuality is an elixir we are offering to the gods. The streaming ecstatic energies and sacred juices flowing in your body are here to assist in your enlightenment. All of the practices of tantra yoga may come to you spontaneously, in the fire and ecstasy of desire, to help you go further into divine awareness. Your body may turn into a pure hum of vibration, the essence of mantras. You may taste the nectar of life. The electricity flowing along your spine and skin may shoot upward into heaven and downward into the earth. You may feel as if you are dancing, immersed in music, or dissolved into space.



संगम

SAṂGAMA

Samgama: Coming together. Meeting, union, intercourse. Connection or contact with. Sexual union. Confluence; the confluence of two rivers or of a river and the ocean (such confluences are always held sacred). Conjunction of planets. Harmony. Adaptation. Point of intersection. United.

Practice

In this yukti, the moment of orgasm is the gateway to cosmic awareness. When we come together in orgasm, the rivers of shakti flow into each other.

There is a series of perceptions to enjoy and embrace along the way. First honor the shakti, the divine power manifesting in you and your lover. The desire for sex is a gift of the divine. Then honor the coming together of two shaktis—the shakti of your passion and the shakti of your lover. You are flowing toward each other. You yearn to gush. Then honor the sensations of orgasm, which flood every cell and nerve of your body, as a manifestation of the essential happiness of your own soul. The verse invites you to know, “This flash of joy is my essential reality.”

Use all the skills of yoga you have developed in your daily practice to cherish each moment of lovemaking. When you find the meditation practice that truly suits your individual nature, it will enhance your ability to be present with this intensity.

Every other sutra prepares us for lovemaking and gives the body a chance to be ready to give and receive love. *Pranashakti* flows through our senses like a river of energy and tunes them for life, enlightenment, and sex. Orgasm is a magnificent moment, and every nerve has to be ready, willing, and able to partake of the mystery.



लेहन

LEHANA

Lehana: The act of licking, tasting, or lapping with the tongue.

Practice

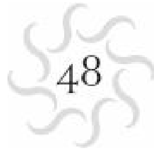
We can bathe in the experience of lovemaking again and again, even if we are not with our lover. Welcome the memory of kissing, licking, lapping, touching, and being touched, and in meditation allow your consciousness to open up to the universe embracing you.

Love changes us. Its touch goes deep inside and remains in our cellular memory. The delight is supposed to be lasting. If you have ever been in love or want to be, you can let your heart and soul be filled with the juiciness of this love as if it were happening right now.

During meditation, recall the experience of making love and let it energize all your nerves. Sexual arousal is a form of *pranashakti* flowing through your body, nourishing you and rejuvenating your will to live. This is an important practice on the path of intimacy. We learn so much from love. The sense memory of any moment of love can be a gateway into a deeply nourishing meditation.

Simple moments of embrace change the cells of our bodies. Your daily meditation practice should keep you tuned for sex, vacations, work, and play. When you think of lovemaking and savor the feeling, your nerves tingle. This will happen spontaneously, and it will come and go. Even a second of that tingle feeds life-giving prana through the nerves. You could be lying in the sun, walking in the wind, feeling the contact of nature on your skin, and be reminded of your lover's caress. Although lovemaking memories are particularly nourishing, many kinds of memories feed us. *Bharatsmṛteḥ* is "nourished, full." *Smr* is "to remember, recollect." Notice that within the word *remember* is *member,* which in Sanskrit is *anga.* Re-membering is itself a form of yoga—connecting, linking together.

There is a joke within the word *samplavaḥ,* which means "flowing together, meeting and swelling of waters, flood, deluge, noise, tumult (especially of battle), submersion by water, destruction, *ruin.*" One day when I was working on this text, a friend called and said, "I'm *ruined.* I have the perfect job, perfect apartment, perfect yoga class, the perfect circle of friends. My life is as good as can be if you are a single woman living alone at age thirty-five. But I met a man that I love, and now I have to throw all that away and change everything so that I can be with him."



बान्धव

BĀNDHAVA

Bandhava: A kinsman, relation (especially a maternal relation), friend.

Practice

When you are meditating and think of someone, a friend or family member, savor the nature of the bond between you. If you love the person, there is joy in that bond. You can meditate on that *ananda.* It is a path to the soul.

Bandhava refers to bonding, and resonates with *bandha:* "connection or intercourse with; putting together, uniting; a mode of sexual union—there are said to be sixteen, eighteen, thirty-six, or even eighty-four modes; constructing, building a bridge; bridging over (the sea); directing the mind or eyes; conceiving, cherishing, feeling; arrangement of musical sounds, composition; a border, framework, enclosure, receptacle; a sinew, tendon."

Bandha is a realm of yoga techniques that involve "containing" the vital energies or prana of the body. Thus, the word suggests that any attachment, any of your relationships, if approached with skillful awareness, is a yoga. *Bandha* is building a bridge over the sea, making a connection between two hearts. Our relationships are pathways to enlightenment.

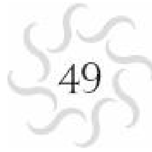
When we are bonded with other people, it is as if there are strings connecting our hearts to theirs, and these strings vibrate as they stretch. A bond of relationship is a "tendon" and also "an arrangement of musical sounds." There is a music to each of our bonds.

Bonding is an experience we all know, a very human moment. The teaching suggests we dive deeper into the joy of relatedness, of bonding, and cherish it with the total power of our attention. Take this rising bliss, this *anandam udgatam,* as a gift of the divine, meditate on it, and merge with it.

Ananda is a dimension of the divine—a vast oceanic experience, an ocean of delight. Even though we, as souls, are incarnate, we are also in oneness with the bliss of eternal consciousness, *sat-chit-ananda.* When we see someone we love, a gateway to this divine bliss opens up. Each separation and reunion with a loved one reminds us of the union of body and soul. One of the meanings of *yoga* is "union," and therefore a reunion teaches us something about yoga.

Make a practice of meditating on this joy. Each person you love or have loved is a doorway to the divine. When you think of them, it is as if you are thinking a mantra, a name of God. When you unite with them, even by cherishing their memory in your heart, you are practicing a kind of *bhakti,* love yoga. Dogs are masters of this *dharana.* When dogs see someone they love, they don't hold back. They levitate with bliss; it rises in them, and they leap. Lately, part of my practice has been to meditate on the uninhibited joy dogs express. Teachers are everywhere in our environment and in the connections we have with all other living beings. Who are your teachers

on the path of love?



रस

RASA

Rasa: Juice, best or finest part of anything, essence, liquor, elixir, potion, nectar, semen, taste, flavor, love, affection, desire, charm, pleasure, delight, the taste or character of a work.

Practice

I love the word *rasa.* What a range of succulent meanings! You can meditate with *rasa,* which means physical tastes and also the juiciness of life in general. *Rasa* is a state of cherishing life in which you are open to the outer world and its ever-changing play, and open to your inner world and the ever-changing play of your subjective responses. *Rasa* emerges any time you are savoring your life experience, witnessing your own emotions as if you are watching a play or movie.

Juice yourself up. If you are practicing meditation, develop and cherish your appreciation for the great tastes in life. If you are attentive, a sip of pure water is delicious. You might find yourself craving sunlight, water, the air you find in a forest, the smell of garlic, the taste of apricots or ripe fruit, chocolate with sea salt, a sip of wine or high-quality juice. These desires may be telling you of an element you need for your health—your physical, emotional, or spiritual wellbeing. Yoga refines instincts; you need to listen to them. As your body awakens, so will desires; explore them as appropriate for your situation.

Meditators often practice on an empty stomach, before breakfast and dinner, when the body is getting ready to eat. Hunger arises, and you reject it. It rises again, and you dissolve it. Over time, this may result in your body becoming unenthusiastic about food and uninterested in digesting it. Your metabolism may slow down, and your digestion gets weak. Many practitioners experience diminishing vitality and health as a result. But if you cherish desires and let your body eagerly look forward to eating, you will tend to have better digestion and better instincts about what to eat and how much.

Seek out the most yummy smells and tastes available to you. Relish them. In meditation, when desire for a taste or smell arises, welcome it and meditate on it. Whenever you are eating or drinking something delicious, give an extra minute to savoring. That extra sixty seconds can be quietly life changing.



आरूढ

ĀRŪḌHA

Arudha: Mounted, ascended, bestridden (as a horse). Risen. Raised up, elevated on high. Undertaken. Reached, brought to (often used in compounds, such as *indriyaruḍha,* meaning "brought under the cognizance of the senses, perceived"). The mounting, arising. Leaping upon, covering.

Practice

The inner motion of meditation is presented here as an enthusiastic, life-embracing activity like jumping on a horse—"Let's ride!" This sutra is saying, "If you want to practice yoga, mount up! Jump onto your greatest joy and go."

Asvada is "eating with relish, also (metaphorically) tasting, flavor, enjoying." Any sensual pleasure is a gateway into meditation. The practice here is to savor the banquet of the senses, especially music, which is a joy like nothing else in the world. Mount the joy as it arises in you, and ride it into oneness with the soul.

Yoga extends the reach of our senses. When we utilize this extended reach, we fine-tune our abilities to metabolize prana, the energy of life. This sutra is inviting us to attend to the feast of the senses that is everyday life and to use the skills we practice in yoga to ascend and transcend with the joy.



स्वरूप

SVARŪPA

Svarupa: One's own form or shape. Your own condition, character, nature. Your own peculiar character. Wise, learned.

Practice

This verse begins with *yatra yatra,* "wherever, whithersoever." Wherever your mind finds satisfaction, there is your meditation practice. Then we see the amazing word *svarupa,* "your own peculiar nature." A reading of this verse would be, "Wherever your mind wanders, there you can experience the absolute bliss of your peculiar nature."

If you talk to people about their secret joy, that thing they love so much they live for it, there is an infinite range of peculiar activities. Rejuvenating old cars. Fly-fishing. Bathing naked in mountain streams. Training dogs. Gardening. Painting mandalas. Golf. Surfing. It doesn't matter what you love. What matters is that you love it and you choose it freely.

Svarupa is the shape of your soul. In all these practices, in everything you do in meditation, follow the shape of your own soul. Practice in a way that feels to you like your favorite hobby or indulgence—that natural way you would putter in the garden if you love gardening, wander around a city if you are a traveler, curry the horse if you are a horse person, play your instrument if you are a musician—and you are just alone, exploring.

Para ananda svarupa is "the transcendental joy of your unique character." This suggests that you get to the universal through the personal. No matter how wounded, wacky, or wonderful you think you are, celebrate your individuality.



निद्रा

NIDRĀ

Nidra: To fall asleep, sleep, slumber. sleep, slumber, sleepiness, sloth. The budding state of a flower. A mystic name of the letter *bh.*

Practice

Sleep is an important part of meditation, and you should always welcome the impulse to fall into sleep. Take good care of yourself and tuck yourself in.

Nidra is sometimes *yoganidra:* "meditation-sleep," a state of half meditation, half sleep.

We all fall asleep for a few seconds or minutes here and there in meditation, and it's wonderful. Be prepared—have blankets and pillows at hand, so that you can luxuriate in the sleep if it happens. If you have been meditating for a while, you also might find yourself called to take naps at certain times, and many yogis find that these naps are deeper than meditation. You don't just fall asleep—you fall into magic, into the arms of the Goddess.

Meditating is a courtship. You are romancing the intrinsic divinity of life, dating *pranashakti.* There comes a time when the Goddess embraces you and takes you into her realm. What is falling asleep? It is pure surrender.

Your daily meditation practice tunes your nerves and cleans up the pathways of perception. Day by day, if you honor each impulse that arises, you attend to all the unfinished business in your mind and heal your nerves. Then you are ready. Because you are tuned to your body, you can feel the call for a nap, like a cat. And you fall into something: sometimes instead of inner darkness, it's inner light. This is *para devi prakasate* (*para,* "beyond, transcendental"; Devi, the Goddess; *prakasha,* "visible, shining, manifestation, laughter"). The Universal Soul in the form of the Goddess, who is more ancient than time and younger than springtime, who is concerned for you, has come from beyond eternity to care for you, to fill you with her shining energy, and light you up with her laughter.



तेजस्

TEJAS

Tejas: Aura, glow, ray, brilliance, radiance, light, fire, luster. Spiritual power. Ardor. Splendor.

Practice

This is the sunbathing sutra, a meditation on *tejas,* radiance. Attention is invited to delight in the brilliance of *surya,* the sun. Begin with the image of *surya akasha,* the sun's luminosity permeating all of space. After a while, you will dissolve into the light. As you come back from dissolution, lightly consider the thought, *sva atma rupa,* "this is my essence." Don't be surprised if you laugh in delight. The sutra ends with a form of the word *prakasha,* "splendor, luster, expansion, and laughter."

Never do any practice unless you love it. Only meditate on the sun if you adore it. Love activates your instincts, the ones you need to be successful in this yukti and to protect yourself appropriately. *Tejas* has other meanings, including, "the bright appearance of the human body in health and beauty; fiery energy, ardor, vital power, essence; semen virile; the brain; gold." It is not just the fire of the sun that is the meditation topic here; it is the life-giving, vitalizing effect of being outdoors in the sun, the sense of being sun-kissed, filled with essence, and a sweet, subtle sexuality.

Whenever you are meditating on the relationship of your body with an element, be aware of dosage: how much of this is healthy for you in this present form, and what amount is too much? Do not look directly at the sun, ever. The light is so intense that it can damage your eyes. So you can meditate on the sun in your imagination. You could also meditate on the radiance of a light bulb, candle, or wood fire.



खेचर

KHECARA

Khecara: Moving in the air, flying. A bird. Any aerial being (as a messenger of the gods). A particular mudra or position of the fingers. An earring or a cylinder of wood passed through the lobe of the ear.

Practice

Sometimes the life-force in us just wants to break out and be wildly free, as if we were flying, breathing flame on people, or able to put on such a scary face that everyone would leave us alone. Children do this as the mood strikes them, and in yoga this movement has a name—*mudra,* meaning "that which gives joy."

The text lists a series of mudras, both wild and peaceful poses. Strike a pose. Feel free to throw yourself down into the corpse pose, as carefree as a skeleton on Halloween. Make a face as if you were angry or absolutely astonished, eyes wide open in awe. Sometimes in meditation practice, such gestures will spontaneously arise and carry you. There is a sense of supreme satisfaction as you fly beyond your ordinary constrictions.

Meditation is powered by our life energy, which wants to break free. And when it does, *pranashakti* is both peaceful *and* wild. We need to bust out some new moves. This often happens to people after a couple of years of sitting meditation; their bodies just get tired of sitting, and that is it—sitting is over. From now on, let's dance.

If we have come to yoga for healing, we may have needed our practice to be a cast or cage so that the bone in a broken wing can set. Now it is time to stretch our wings and fly again, so our practice needs to change. We feel an inner urge to abandon the cage of the practice that got us this far. This is not a failure of yoga; it is the success.



निराश्रय

NIRĀŚRAYA

Nirasraya: Having or offering no prop or stay. Supportless. Shelterless. Alone. Lying open.

Practice

There is a time to take shelter in props, and there is a time to be out in the open. When you have been doing something in sequence, after many repetitions you may find you can glide over some steps very lightly and touch down on others. This is one of the implications of *nirasraya.* You can set aside or skip over the prop of your technique.

Part of the delight of watching athletes is seeing the way they flow through their events, almost levitating. This same type of flow also develops in meditation—*antar yoga,* the inner flow of your technique. After you have gone through the steps of your practice many times and you know them by heart, go ahead and allow yourself a kind of carelessness, an easy freedom. Fly through the sequence and skip parts if you want. There comes a time to just lean into the practice as if you are skiing. At this point, you leave behind your sense of sequence and lose your addiction to support.

The mind moves at the speed of thought, and you can perceive many thoughts in one second. Sometimes your mind will delight in doing something in a few seconds that used to take half an hour or all day.

The opposite is also true: sometimes you may want to slow down a process. Human beings invent meditation techniques almost continuously, the very ones described in the Vijnana Bhairava Tantra. These come and go so quickly, in just five or ten seconds, that you may not even notice you've engaged in them. The inner teacher, the wisdom of life, has offered you a bit of instruction, an attitude adjustment, a moment of rejuvenation. When you recognize a sutra and relate to it, you have probably already practiced it spontaneously—*nirasraya,* "without props"—many times. One day you may sense the need to map out a series of steps, feel the nuances, and practice them individually. You may practice this way for minutes or months, until it becomes time to leave the technique behind and return to *nirasraya.*



व्योमन्

VYOMAN

Vyoman: Heaven, sky, atmosphere, air, space, ether (as an element), wind or air (of the body), a temple sacred to the sun. The tenth astrological mansion. Preservation, welfare.

Practice

This yukti is an appreciation of space. One way to explore space is to stand or sit and form your arms into a circle and become aware of enclosed space. Just notice what is there; be curious. Let space be itself, infinite, as you embrace it. Embrace the nothing.

Imagine you are encircling the whole universe. What quality of awareness do you bring to this embrace? What texture of creativity, love, and welcoming do you want to give?

Now shift perspective. Be the universe enclosing you with love, welcoming the birth of something new.



निपत्

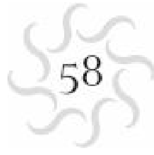
NIPAT

Nipat: To fly down, settle down, descend on, alight. To rush upon, attack, assail. To fall down, upon, or into. To throw one's self at a person's feet. To fall into ruin or decay, be lost. To enter, be inserted, get a place. To direct (the eyes) toward.

Practice

This is a meditation on the experience of being ravished, transfixed, and overwhelmed by something you see in the physical world. You see someone so magnificent that immediately you have the impulse to throw yourself at his feet. You see a baby crawling along, and you are overcome with adoration, falling to your knees beside her and making cooing sounds.

Awe occurs spontaneously; be ready to go with it. See a marvelous work of art, the ravishing gorgeousness of nature. There is skill in being so open that we can be slain by beauty. We throw ourselves at the feet of that manifestation. The yukti here is aesthetic rapture; we transcend on the *rasa* of amazement.



जिह्व

JIHVA

Jihva: The tongue. The tongue or tongues of *agni,* various forms of flame. Three flames are named in the Rig Veda. In astrology, the twenty-eighth yoga.

Practice

This sutra refers to a whole world of practices having to do with the tongue in its role as a doorway into the subtle body. We are invited to attend to the tongue as an altar that receives the food that fuels the fire of life. The physical tongue accepts the offerings placed on it. It cherishes the food, relishes it, welcomes it into the temple of the body, where it soon becomes warmth and energy. The subtle tongue, the tongue made of prana, receives the energy in the food and transmutes this directly into vitality.

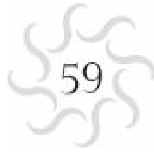
Agni, a central concept in this yoga, means "fire, sacrificial fire (of three kinds, *garhapatya, ahavaniya,* and *daksina*), the god of fire, the fire of the stomach, digestive faculty, gastric fluid."

Explore your tongue in all its senses—taste, temperature, touch, and movement. The tongue can perceive many tastes, textures, and temperatures.

If you enjoy drinking, pour two glasses of high-proof alcohol, such as brandy. Set one on fire and watch it burn. Then sip the other. Realize that food and drink really are fuel for fire. You are a slow-burning flame.

In lovemaking, when you are aroused and feel like kissing someone, explore the relationship of your tongue and your clitoris or penis. Explore the movement of the tip of the tongue. Explore the connection that runs down through the *madhya,* the middle of your being; this connection is a dancing flame through your whole core.

This meditation leads to a remarkable feeling of peace *(shanti)* as you accept the essential reality of flame.



क्षण

KṢAṆA

Ksana: Any instantaneous point of time, instant, twinkling of an eye, moment. A leisure moment, vacant time, leisure. A fit or suitable moment, opportunity. A festival. The center, middle.

Practice

This is an afternoon-nap-type of practice, or *shavasana,* in which you lie down and give in to gravity so completely that it feels like you are suspended in space. At first you feel the earth, the floor, or your mat or bed beneath you, then that feeling dissolves, and you are simply floating.

This sensation can happen in an instant, and it is to be cherished. There is a shift of perception inside this paradox. You lie down and give in to gravity, let your weight drop, and the instant you surrender into the weight, you become light. In the twinkling of an eye, the sensation shifts to a feeling of boundlessness. When the moment is right, something liberating can happen, effortlessly. It feels so good it must be a sin. This moment of leisure becomes an inner festival, a celebration.



चल

CALA

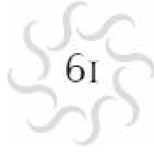
Cala: Moving, trembling, shaking, loose.

Practice

This sutra is about *dancing.* Shaking your booty is a sacred activity. The yukti here is to spaciously embrace *divya augha,* the flood of divine sensations aroused by dancing. *Divya* is “to long for heaven; divine, heavenly, celestial; supernatural, wonderful, magical; charming, beautiful, agreeable; the divine world or anything divine.” *Augha* means “a flood, a stream.”

Everyone who has danced knows that when you’re dancing, you are flooded by celestial sensations. *Calana* is also “shaking, wagging (the tail), making loose.” Rock out! What makes you want to wag your tail, throw off all restraint? Put on music that makes you want to move.

Another area of exploration, which you may already know and celebrate, has to do with the rocking sensations of riding horses or any sport in which your pelvis is being rocked. Snowboarding, skiing, and certain styles of surfing involve a lot of hip swaying. The rocking creates undulation through your spine, waves of energy rippling everywhere, and you can ride these waves into the union of your body and the divine.



आकाश

ĀKĀŚA

Akasha: A free or open space, vacuity. The ether, sky, or atmosphere. In philosophy, the subtle and ethereal fluid (supposed to fill and pervade the universe and to be the peculiar vehicle of life and of sound). Brahma (as identical with ether).

Practice

Lie on your back, gaze upward at the sky, and become one with the mystery. Children do this and it's fun. Whether beginners or advanced, meditators need to bathe in space. There is nothing like it, no substitute for this type of gazing. Something of the *atman,* the nature of the soul, becomes clear. If for some reason you are stuck in your cubicle at work, you can cultivate the feeling of spaciousness by imagining the sky at night. Look at the imagery astronomers produce. But if you can, go to any outdoor space that's available. Build up an appetite to indulge yourself in space.

In this yukti, you dissolve into space, transcend with space, merge with it, become it. Meeting yourself in this way can be somewhat terrifying (*bhairava* is "the property of exciting terror"). At the same time, it is a relief to let go of the constriction of being an individual.



लीन

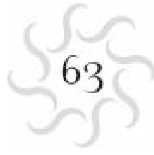
LĪNA

Lina: Clung or pressed closely together, attached or devoted to, merged in, sticking. Lying or resting on, staying in, lurking, hiding. Dissolved, absorbed in, disappeared, vanished.

Practice

There is so much teaching in this one word. If we take the definition as a teacher, we hear that on the path to becoming *absorbed* in meditation, we might *cling* to the object of attention, such as the sky *(viyat).* We feel *devoted* to it. In the next heartbeat we are *resting* in it, *hiding* in it and being safe. Then we *disappear* into it—we *vanish.* These are subtle internal postures of attention, and each may arise, stay for a while, then dissolve into the next quality.

Devoting, resting, clinging—your own sequence will be unique to you, may take only a few seconds, and may vary from moment to moment. On another day you might close your eyes and go straight to *absorption*—immediately you are absorbed in the infinite sky. Yet another day you simply feel a little bit *restful.* That's it. Welcome all these nuances and let them shift and change into each other continually.



तमस्

TAMAS

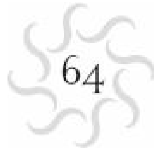
Tamas: Darkness, gloom, the darkness of hell or a particular division of hell, the obscuration of the sun or moon in eclipses, mental darkness, ignorance, illusion, error, one of the three qualities or constituents of everything in creation.

Practice

Run a loop in your mind: dreaming, deep sleep, awakening, dreaming, sleeping, awakening. Think of what you do in twenty-four hours, the states of consciousness you roll through. Meditate on the rhythm, the flow from one state to the other. Over and over, this whole wacky cycle rolls on and on. The yukti here is to meditate on the succession of these states of consciousness and thus become your true body—eternal consciousness, *bhairava.*

The idea of a yoga practice is that we awaken, orient ourselves toward a greater source of nourishment and inspiration, and then go to work. As a gift of practice, something shines through, a kind of luminosity permeating the world. Here you are, flowing through day and night, exertion and rejuvenation. Whether you are working, resting, or sleeping, the uncreated light wants to shine through and dispel the gloom.

Work is a way of engaging with the world. Work is also love and what you give to others. Your to-do list might feel like hell some days, but the light of consciousness wants to illuminate your work as well as your meditation practice.



कृष्ण

KṚṢṆA

Krishna: Black, dark blue. Wicked, evil. The dark half of the lunar month, from full to new moon. The fourth or kali yuga. A crow, an avatar of Vishnu. Blackness. Iron, lead. The black part of the eye. The black spots in the moon. A kind of demon or spirit of darkness.

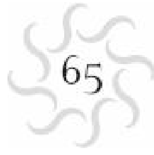
Practice

Picture this: You are alone in a strange forest or desert at midnight, in the dark of the moon, in a storm, and it is pouring rain. With your eyes open, you can see nothing. You hear only the sound of the rain. There may be a flash flood. There is an uncomfortable pounding sense that something you can't see is going to come racing out of the blackness and clobber you. The yukti here is to use the terribleness of darkness as a gateway into the mystery of the soul. Meditate on this terror, and something mysterious happens. You become one with the blackness. This yukti tells you to take your worst fear and merge with it.

You may have your own equivalent of this scenario. Or perhaps the experience is purely internal: you awaken at two in the morning, in your own bed, filled with an eerie loneliness. When we face a terror, the vibrancy of it becomes part of our consciousness, and we are not the same.

As part of preparing to translate the Bhairava Tantra, I lived outdoors on retreat in Hawaii for a year. For months I camped out in an area of black lava, miles from anyone, a few feet back from the ocean. When it rained, I would sleep in my Jeep because I had no tent. It was uncomfortable, so sometimes at night in the storms, I would stand outside in the warm rain in the middle of the night. I came to love being immersed in pitch black—black lava, black sky—and the howling wind, the swirling roar of the storm, and the crashing surf.

Notice this sutra has *bhairava* again—the terror of facing the unknown. It is strangely liberating to go through the fear to the other side, which is indescribable. Beyond and inside the wildness of nature, there is intense friendliness.



प्रसार

PRASĀRA

Prasara: Spreading or stretching out, extension. A trader's shop. Opening (the mouth). Going forward, advance, progress, free course, coming forth, rising, appearing, diffusion. Range (of the eye). Boldness, courage. A fight, war. An iron arrow. Speed. Affectionate solicitation. In music, a kind of dance.

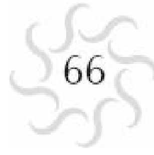
Practice

This is a meditation on darkness. In your mind's eye, see darkness spreading, diffusing *(prasara)* everywhere, into infinity. Embrace the blackness and become one with the body of infinite I-AM consciousness.

Darkness is a mystery, both terrifying and blissful. I tend to be somewhat afraid of this practice, even though it is the very first meditation I did as part of the scientific research on meditation in 1968. I usually feel a kind of shudder, like when jumping into a cold pool or ocean, when I meditate on darkness. There is a set of strange sensations until I get used to it, and then it is such a relief.

There was a season in 1972 when, over a period of months, I sensed darkness coming from the back of my brain, spreading forward and threatening to engulf me. It was a creepy, background sensation, as if black tar was taking over my brain. This happened so slowly that I was only subliminally aware of it. I instinctively recoiled from it and thought I was depressed. Finally, one morning it got intense enough that I consciously noticed it while meditating, and I gave in.

Once I relaxed into it, the darkness quickly spread throughout my brain, body, and the space in front of me. It was restful. I turned into inky blackness, and it was sort of refreshing, like slipping into a warm bath of pure blackness. It changed my cells and that was that. I had been clinging to the light—apparently, the light side of the yin-yang dynamic—and now I was letting the opposites dance in me in their own way. Even though I typically arise at four in the morning and do yoga and meditation in the darkness, loving the resonant silence, I have to return to this yukti again and again.



इन्द्रिय

INDRIYA

Indriya: Fit for or belonging to or agreeable to Indra, the god of the senses; a companion of Indra. Power, force, the quality that belongs especially to the mighty Indra. An exhibition of power, a powerful act. Bodily power, power of the senses. Virile power. Semen virile. Faculty of sense, sense, organ of sense. The number five as a symbol of the five senses (in addition to the five organs of perception—eye, ear, nose, tongue, and skin).

Practice

In yoga, the senses—seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching—are the *indriyas,* "the companions of Indra," who is the king of the gods. The senses are delightful to the divine. The senses are the entourage of God, always entertaining.

In the literature of yoga, Indra is a party animal with an insatiable appetite for *soma,* the alcoholic and psychedelic drink that is the nectar of life. If we take this metaphorically (always a good idea with Sanskrit), it means that the senses permeating our bodies are to be celebrated as divine. Yoga practices play with the senses and extend their range. *Tantra* is "extend, stretch, weave together." We use the senses to weave together flesh and spirit, this moment and eternity.

Cherish your senses as gifts of the divine. Breathe with each sense for a few seconds. You could think the name of each sense and inwardly cherish it, welcome its music, then welcome its continual flow of information about the outer and inner world. Add the senses of movement and balance, essential to everyone and especially yogis. "Now I am awake to touch . . . vision . . . hearing . . . smell . . . taste . . . touch . . . balance . . . movement." Over time, you will notice a delicious enhancement of your ability to notice your world, both inside and out. This is a simple practice of being grateful for every sense, and it will enrich your daily experience no end.

When one sense is affected, they all are affected. If you close one room of the party, the guests congregate in the other rooms. When you close your eyes, your inner eyes open; you can become more aware of your skin sensations and your sense of hearing. People do this spontaneously; they close their eyes and sigh when receiving a massage or when listening to music.



ज्ञान

JÑĀNA

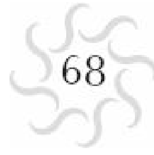
Jnana: Knowing, becoming acquainted with. Knowledge, the higher knowledge (derived from meditation on the one Universal Spirit). Knowledge about anything cognizant. Conscience. Engaging in.

Practice

This is the *aha* sutra—a sudden glimpse beyond the ordinary. We are astonished, and in moments of discovery, insight, and revelation, the whole body comes alive. The eyebrows rise. The mouth opens, and we may gasp, "Ah!" It is the sudden sensation of being flooded with knowledge, *jnana.* That gasp of "Ah!" or "Aha!" is a natural mantra.

If you have had this experience, then you can invoke it intentionally in meditation; you can use the feeling and the *ah* as a focus.

There is a universe of techniques here. One loving approach is to use *jna augha* (pronounced *jnaana aughah*) as a mantra. *Jna* is "to know, remember, recognize." *Augha* is "stream, flood." So the meaning of the mantra is, "streams of divine knowledge flowing through me."



वर्ण

VARṆA

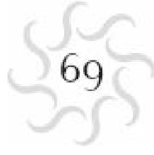
Varna: A covering, cloak, mantle. A cover, lid. Outward appearance, exterior. Luster, beauty. Color, tint, dye, pigment (for painting or writing). Character, nature, quality. A letter, sound, vowel, syllable, word. A musical sound or note, also applied to the voice of animals. The order or arrangement of a song or poem.

Practice

The yukti here is to be alert for a sound that emerges from the interface of spirit and matter, the infinite and the individual. It is the primordial song of soul entering the body, almost an animal sound. The sound emerges from the lovemaking of body and soul.

You can't speak this sound; you can't think it. In meditation, when you are at the level where soul and body are loving each other, you may hear it.

In moments of intense, intimate lovemaking, in the surrender and letting go, you may hear a sound emerge spontaneously from the throat of your beloved. This is the closest we can come to the self-existent mantra of creation. In meditation, welcome this profound surrender and cherish its sound resonating within you, whenever you come into its presence. Let your consciousness merge with that sound, and be touched by the primal creative power of life.



अनावृत

ANĀVṚTA

Anavrta: Uncovered, undressed. Unenclosed, open. Unlimited, free.

Practice

The yukti here is meditating on the body as having the form of unlimited space stretching in all directions. You are naked before infinity, unlimited and free. As you fall into freedom, you realize your true body is *chitih shakti*—the divine energy and power manifesting as your individual consciousness.

You can enter the yukti playfully and imaginatively: "This body is made out of heaven, out of the infinite sky stretching away in all directions."

Along with the freedom resulting from this practice, there is a sense of being undressed. You know you are in the midst of this practice if suddenly, even with all your clothes on, you feel naked. Some people feel this way naturally, and it's a problem for them. If you feel too transparent, invent a series of hand motions—like what you see orchestra conductors doing. Make up your own motions of activating a force field around your body, a subtle boundary made out of vibrating space. With your hands, paint a beautiful sphere of shimmering energy around you at a comfortable distance. Do a few minutes of motion in this way, and then go for a walk and notice how you feel.



विभिद्

VIBHID

Vibhid: To split or break in two, to break in pieces, to cleave asunder, to cause to split, to divide, to separate, to open, to pierce, to sting, to loosen, to untie, to break, to infringe, to violate, to scatter, to disperse, to dispel, to destroy, to alter, to change (the mind). To be split or broken, to be burst asunder, to be changed or altered. To alienate, to estrange.

Practice

Any moment of wounding immediately produces a healing response from life. Whenever you experience pain or violation in any form, use the terror as a gateway. Stop and feel the intensity. Let it wake you up. Unite with pure, shining universal consciousness, and begin to heal.

We are many-bodied beings, with bodies corporeal, emotional, mental, and celestial. We have a physical body, *anna maya kosha.* We have an emotional body—to coin a phrase, *vibhava maya kosha,* or "body of emotional drama." *Mano maya kosha* is the mental body, and *ananda maya kosha* is the body of bliss. When we get injured on one level, it can throw us through a door in space-time into the next dimension. Meditation helps us to develop the ability to quickly, almost instantaneously, relax into a pain sensation.

The verse also uses the word *suci:* "The sharp point or tip of anything or any pointed object. A kind of military array in which the sharpest, most active soldiers are placed in front. An index, table of contents to a book. In astronomy, the earth's disc in computing eclipses (or the corrected diameter of the earth). Gesticulation, dramatic action. A kind of sex (coitus)."

When the sharp point of pain pierces us, a table of contents to our suffering gets written in our bodies. As we heal, the healing process encodes wisdom into our cells and writes a song of healing into our flesh. When our reality gets punctured, this spontaneous mantra rises in us: *ouuuuch.* It's a particle of OM, calling out to life: "Help me, I'm hurt here." When we are hurt, physically or emotionally, we can call out to the forces of life. OM is the primal song of creation joyously expanding, and *ouch* is the beginning of reconnecting with the joy.



चित्त

CITTA

Citta: Noticed. Aimed at, longed for. Appeared, visible. Attending, observing. Thinking, reflecting, imagining, thought. Intention, aim, wish. The heart, mind. Memory. Intelligence, reason. In astrology, the ninth mansion.

Practice

In meditation, gently consider this:

> There is no mind.
> There is no intellect.
> There is no ego.
> I am pure consciousness.
> I am pure Being.

Sometimes meditating on these words just once is liberating. Let the light of this passage shine inside for a day, then go out and live. Do not force the recognition of this truth; let it come to you gently.

This sutra is part of a sequence of yuktis about being startled out of your ordinary perception and opened to the Beyond.



माया

MĀYĀ

Maya: Measuring. Creating illusions. Art, wisdom, extraordinary or supernatural power (only in the earlier language). Illusion, unreality, deception, fraud, trick, sorcery, witchcraft, magic. An unreal or illusory image, phantom, apparition. Duplicity. Compassion, sympathy. The name of the mother of Gautama Buddha. An alternate name of Lakshmi.

Practice

This is a declaration of independence meditation: "Let the world turn; let the illusions spin. Let everyone else believe the scripts they are playing out. Party on, all you people."

Maya refers to the gorgeousness of the universe and all art, poetry, and magic. *Maya* is the power of a performer to embody a character and enchant us, the power of a storyteller to weave the threads of the characters and dialogues together into an absorbing tale.

Maya is beguiling. The universe is supposed to be so beautiful that we are endlessly enchanted and drawn into scenario after scenario. We are supposed to fall in and forget everything else for two hours, as we would with any good movie. That's why we buy a ticket. *Maya* is also *vimohin* —"perplexing, bewildering." Somehow we love this aspect of the drama.

This being Sanskrit, there are always jokes embedded in the statement. In the context of all the other sutras, this one is saying, "You all can believe in the reality of *maya,* but I am standing here on the firm ground of absolutely *nothing.* I will just stand here in midair for a while and enjoy the show."



इच्छा

ICCHĀ

Iccha: Wish, desire, inclination. In math, a question or problem. In grammar, the desiderative form.

Practice

This yukti is something you can do anytime you perceive the rise of a desire: spot the initial flash or sparkle of the desire as it begins to rise. Usually this requires great attentiveness, so at first you may only notice it during clear meditations.

You have a choice: you can absorb the energy of the desire and dissolve it, you can modify it, or you can use the desire itself as a means of transcendence, following it back into the source of all desire.

The English word *desire* is said to be from the Latin *de sidere,* "from the stars." Desire is from the heavens, and to follow your desire is to follow your star. You have a dozen or more desire-stars to follow, your own constellation. These include friendship, exercise, food, sex, play, and power. Desires often come as a sequence—you want to eat good food, in a great place, while feeling love and laughing with your friends.

The technique here is to savor the energy of desire and use it as you would a mantra, a focus for meditation. Desires flow, like an electric current; let that flow of juice nurture and energize you. Imbibe the sparkle, dissolve, transcend with that desire, and be fulfilled.



भाव

BHĀVA

Bhava: Becoming, being, existing, turning or transition into. State, condition, true condition, reality, manner of being, temperament, any state of mind or body, way of thinking or feeling, sentiment, intention, love, affection, attachment. The seat of the feelings or affections, heart, soul, mind. Wanton sport, dalliance.

Practice

If we allow the definition of *bhava* to teach us, we hear an unending stream of inspiration: "As you engage with any of these practices, be loving and affectionate toward who you are. The intention is to turn into yourself, become yourself. As you connect with your heart and soul, let there be wanton sport and dalliance—play, fun and games, friskiness, recreation, and relaxation."

The future case of *bhava* is *bhavet,* which is used thirty times in the Vijnana Bhairava Tantra, always as the last word of a verse, representing a possibility, a hoped-for state, a potential: "It could become." Becoming is mysterious.

Bhava, in turn, is based on *bhu:* "To become, be, arise, come into being, exist, be found, live, stay, abide, happen, occur. To cherish, foster, animate, enliven, refresh, encourage, promote, further. To addict or devote oneself to, practice. To manifest, exhibit, show. Becoming, being, existing, springing, arising. The place of being, space, world, or universe. The earth, ground. Soil. Floor. Pavement. A spot or piece of ground."

If we listen to the teaching of *bhu,* we hear: "Meditate in a way that fosters and enlivens you. Let your practice encourage you to become who you really are. Investigate your addictions; find out what secret is hidden there—what you are really craving—and convert it to a practice. Become devoted to your practice. Cherish your relationship with this spot of ground, the floor, the soil, the pavement, this world, space and the universe."

There is so much meaning in *bhava, bhavet,* and *bhu;* each word in each definition suggests a skill, a *vijnana* (understanding, recognizing, intelligence, skill, proficiency, art). The greatest skill may be to cherish your own being as an expression of the mystery of being and becoming and your place in the divine play.



अर्थ

ARTHA

Artha: Aim, purpose. Cause, motive, reason. Advantage, use, utility. Generally named with *kama* and *dharma*, used in wishing well to another. Thing, object (said of the membrum virile). Object of the senses. Substance, wealth, property, opulence, money. In astrology, name of the second mansion, the mansion of wealth.

Practice

The current of desire flowing through us at all times is acknowledged in the word *artha.*

In the background of yoga philosophy is a life-embracing concept, the four *purusharthas* or aims of human life:

Kama—sensual pleasure; also desire, longing, sexual love
Artha—wealth
Dharma—duty
Moksha—emancipation, liberation; release from worldly existence; setting free

Yoga practice is to serve all of the *purusharthas,* helping us to function better in order to achieve all our desires and fulfill our obligations. When you are flowing through all the *purusharthas* in your own way, there is the feeling of living the life you were designed for.



निराधार

NIRĀDHĀRA

Niradhara: Without receptacle or support.

Practice

When your head becomes cluttered with knowledge, you need a housecleaning. Anything that is not supported by your own direct living experience, toss it out. Maybe it is time to just throw out everything you used to think you know, and start fresh.

There is always something daunting and unsettling when your previous model of reality falls apart. At the same time, the freedom is exhilarating, and the spaciousness makes room for something new.



तन्मय

TANMAYA

Tanmaya: Made up of that, absorbed in or identical with that.

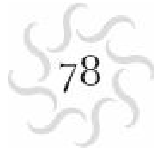
Practice

We all arise from the same source, whatever that is. The laws of nature are identical in my body and those bodies over there.

Humans have an instinct to commune with the universe and with all the other creatures in creation. In this meditation, you follow that instinct and develop a kind of kinship with everything that is in a body—be it a bug, a person, and even a planet. If something has a body, it is a relative of yours.

You can explore this yukti as a walking meditation. Each time you see any living being—a bird flying by, an ant on the ground, a tree, another human being—consider the mantra, “The same consciousness pervades my body and every body.” Look at photos of the earth, the other planets, the stars, and do the same.

This is one of those little perceptions that you might touch on but think is insignificant. Or you might assume such perceptions belong only to advanced yogis. But these experiences can happen to anyone and are a gift of grace.



काम

KĀMA

Kama: Wish, desire, longing, love, affection. Object of desire, love, or pleasure. Enjoyment. Sexual love or sensuality. Love or desire personified, the god of love. A stake in gambling. A species of mango tree. A kind of temple.

Practice

Love is a temple. Whenever you enter here, bring your ready wit to witness the play of the elements and savor the light show.

Cherish the passions that electrify you while you are meditating. Welcome *kama* in all its forms —desire, lust, longing, adoration, and the sense of taking a risk, of gambling with your life. What arises when there is an obstacle to love? Anger, *krodha*—we are aflame with anger, the desire to burn through all obstacles. We get perplexed, *lobha.* And then we swoon, *moha.* Then perhaps we start laughing, *mada* (hilarity, rapture). Uh-oh, *matsarya,* envy and jealousy! Each of the passions sends signals through your whole body and makes your chakras spin with a different hum. Your body may flow through a sequence of passions every few seconds while you are meditating. This is healthy.

If you have an interesting daily life, part of your meditation time will be spent reviewing and replaying any emotions that got stuck in your chakras or were not finished. Attention always wants to finish what was unfinished. This is why it is so beneficial to welcome all energies that arise in meditation. All those thoughts, sensations, and emotions are just information. You are feeling them because awareness is sorting through the various forms of prana.

The average adult reads text at 250 to 300 words a minute, or four or five words per second. We can understand a friend chatting away at several words per second, and we can recognize facial expressions in a flash. We can read our own emotions that quickly, as the energies play through our nerves and senses. When you witness the flow of your passions during meditation, your practice will be as riveting as your favorite soap operas, reality TV, novels, and movies, because your practice is your adventure, your drama, your divine play of life.



इन्द्रजाल

INDRAJĀLA

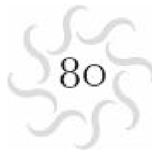
Indrajala: The net of Indra. A weapon employed by Arjuna. Sham, illusion, delusion, magic, sorcery. To juggle. The art of magic.

Practice

This whole universe is magic, a vast arena of illusions put on for your entertainment. Matter and light are fountaining out of nothing. Whirling flames fill the sky. It is all a kind of juggling. The world we see is art, the most wonderful creation; creativity is overflowing everywhere. Everything is moving, revolving—every particle of existence is on the potter’s wheel. When we meditate on this knowledge, joy arises spontaneously.

Look up at the sky. Then look at astronomy images of the same stars. Modern science, particularly physics, astronomy, and astrophysics, has outdone stage magicians in revealing the universe as a magic show. Huge telescopes are orbiting the earth, gathering light from thousands, millions, and billions of light-years away. The images are beautiful beyond description and reveal outer space to be a great work of art.

Awaken to your inner world as magic. Our senses receive the energies streaming in from the world and arrange them onto the canvas of our perception. As you meditate, consider all thoughts, emotions, and sensuous impressions as your personal form of magic show.



दुःख

DUḤKHA

Duḥkha: Uneasy, uncomfortable, unpleasant, difficult. Uneasiness, pain, sorrow, trouble.

Practice

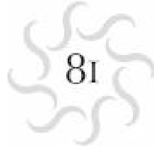
During meditation your mind will be drawn toward whatever pain and sorrow is going on in your body and your life. In any given moment you might feel an ache, which then turns into an irritated sensation, a pang, sting, or soreness. How do we deal with our world of trouble? There are thousands of different strategies for handling uncomfortable sensations, but the simplest one is to allow your attention to be called to the pain and give it space.

The word *duhkha* is literally "bad space" (*dur* is "bad or difficult," and *kha* is "space"). *Kha* is also an axle hole, so *duhkha* is the image of a wheel out of balance, or rough going. (*Su* is the opposite of *dur,* "good," so *sukha* is "good space," or the wheel that is rolling swiftly and easily.)

Kha suggests that we get interested in space itself and from there learn about how to balance the wheels of life. In yoga there is the concept that life energies spin like wheels; *chakra* means "wheel, a potter's wheel, a whirlpool." Your chakras are wheels of energy in motion, each one representing an area of instinct and expression. During meditation you will feel, with a kind of microscopic perception, tiny ways they are out of balance.

Our chakras can hurt from giving too much and not receiving enough, and also from receiving too much and not giving enough. We ache to give the best in us, and we long to be in a flow with our outer and inner world. If you pay attention to an ache, it will try its best to teach you everything, speaking its language of sensation. The quality of attention required to hear it is spacious embracing and tenderness.

If you have a full life—a lover, a job, kids, pets, and projects—you will feel many kinds of pain during meditation. This pain is not to be avoided. It's a signal, not noise. You are a craftswoman or craftsman, tending to your potter's wheel. What feels like pain may be feedback that your work-in-progress is out of balance. The potter puts her hand just so, and balance is restored.



मनस्

MANAS

Manas: Mind (in its widest sense as applied to all the mental powers), intellect, intelligence, understanding, perception, sense, conscience, will. The internal organ or *antah-karana* of perception and cognition, the faculty or instrument through which thoughts enter or by which objects of sense affect the soul. Sometimes joined with *hrd* or *hrdaya,* the heart. The spirit or spiritual principle, the breath or living soul that escapes from the body at death. Thought, imagination, excogitation, invention, reflection, opinion, intention, inclination, affection, desire, mood, temper, spirit.

Practice

Your mind is not what you think. It is vast and a source of awe. If you get interested in *manas,* the yogic concept of "mind," give yourself a chance to delight in how rich the word truly is.

As a meditation, let your attention rest on each word of the definition for one breath: mind, intellect, intelligence, understanding, perception, sense, conscience, will, imagination, invention, opinion, intention, affection, desire, mood, temper, heart, spirit, breath, living soul.



घट

GHAṬA

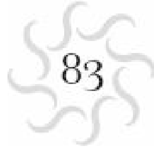
Ghata: Intently occupied or busy with. A jar, pitcher, jug, large earthen water jar, watering pot. A peculiar form of a temple. An elephant's frontal sinus. A border. Suspending the breath as a religious exercise.

Practice

Ghata has a series of jokes in its definition, suggesting that jars are busy and maybe even practicing their own form of pranayama. The yukti here is playful and childlike. Take something simple and ordinary, such as a watering pot or pitcher, and imagine that it has a personality. Imbue it with knowledge *(vijnana)* and desire *(iccha).* Maybe the pitcher even remembers the earth it was formed from and knows a thing or two about transformation.

Animated movies are created by people who have this kind of whimsical perception. Cartoonists think that their bicycle gets cold and lonely if they leave it on the porch at night. Notice in yourself whenever you do this in your own world. Do you talk to your plants or your car? A computer is a kind of jar, a container for billions of tiny bits; do you think that your computer has its own personality? This is animism, the sense that everything is alive and adorable.

When we look at the world in this way, it is as if we receive a transmission of secret knowledge from each little object in the world.



सम्बन्ध

SAṂBANDHA

Sambandha: Binding or joining together. Close connection, union, or association. Conjunction, inherence, connection with or relation to. Personal connection (by marriage), relationship, fellowship, friendship, intimacy with. A friend, ally. A collection, volume, book. Prosperity, success. Fitness, propriety.

Practice

To the extent that your heart is open, in meditation you will find yourself tending to the texture of each relationship in your life. You will feel your heartstrings stretching and may even hear them vibrating. On the path of love, we use yoga to prepare ourselves to be alert and awake to this magnificent mystery—that there are other people in the world and we love them. Technically speaking, we enter cosmic consciousness by meditating on the texture of bonding, *sambandha.*

We all have many relationships—with friends, family, coworkers, teammates, lovers. Each requires its own precise way of holding, its own rules for what an embrace is. Each bond, each connection, each relationship in our life requires the best we can bring, and each moment of contact is surprising.

Every kind of relationship is a kind of embrace, whether you are physically touching or holding someone in your heart. Each person you meet says, "Show me some love," offering you an opportunity to reveal the love inside you. The feeling is exquisite, with its own texture and magic. You create when you relate. When you listen to someone and really see them, more is going on than you may know—a sacred, powerful exchange between "you" and the "other."



स्वशरीर

SVAŚARĪRA

Svasarira: One's own body or person.

Practice

Compassion is a natural human emotion: *com,* "together," and *pati,* "to suffer." When we see our friend hurt her hand, we feel the injury and say, "Ouch!" In this meditation, you take your natural empathy and multiply it with the power of sustained attention.

A lifetime of practices is here. One gateway in is to marvel at individuality, the way each of us, with our own *svasarira,* is an expression of the All, and yet so utterly unique.

Awareness of the fragility of life intensifies this appreciation. *Sarira* means "support or supporter, that which is easily destroyed or dissolved, the body, bodily frame, solid parts of the body (the bones), any solid body, one's body, one's own person, bodily strength" and suggests that even the solid parts of the body are easily destroyed. So cherish this temporary embodiment, for soon enough we will all be gone and onto our next adventure, if there is one. Do not abandon your body before it is time. Embrace your body and use it to extend awareness into the mystery of incarnation.



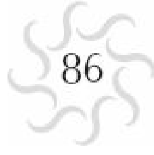
विकल्प

VIKALPA

Vikalpa: Alternation, alternative, option. Variation, combination, variety, diversity, manifoldness. Contrivance, art. Difference of perception, distinction, indecision, irresolution, doubt, hesitation. Admission, statement. False notion, fancy, imagination. Calculation, mental occupation, thinking. Antithesis of opposites.

Practice

This is a wild technique! Let your mind wander anywhere it will, but don't let it rest when it tries to stop. Keep it moving. In this way, you do not allow all your mental occupations and preoccupations, *vikalpas,* a chance to spin their hypnotic web. Whenever your mind goes to a pair of opposites, "I like this and I don't like that," don't give any respect to the distinction. Move on before the opinion even has a chance to shape itself. When you deny your mind anything to hang onto, there is an opportunity to wake up to the true nature of mind, which is beyond all its creations and contrivances.



व्यापक

VYĀPAKA

Vyapaka: Pervading, diffusive, comprehensive, omnipresent, widely spreading or extending, spreading everywhere. In law, comprehending all the points of an argument, pervading the whole plea.

Practice

In this meditation, first you attend to the vastness of infinity, then you attend to your own "I-am-ness" as part of and one with infinity. Release your awareness to refresh itself in the vastness of the universe, then consider the mystery of your own existence as an inseparable part of everything.

For some, this is a spontaneous realization. It is also a prayer and a set of stunning statements for meditation. Here are some phrases you might want to explore:

> Present everywhere is knowledge of the universal spirit.
> Pervading everything is the power of spirit.
> Comprehending all is the supreme consciousness.

The Sanskrit here is so beautiful. Whisper this mantra, if you feel attracted to it, and rest in the delight of freedom: *Sarva jnah. Sarva kartaa. Vyaapakah Paramishvarah.*

Sarva is "every, everything, all together, in all parts, everywhere." *Jna* is "knowing, familiar with, intelligent." *Sarva karta* is "the maker of all." *Vyapakah* is "omnipresent." *Paramishvara* is "far, distant, remote in space, beyond, extreme, ancient, past, future, next, name of the Supreme or Absolute Being, the Universal Soul."



विश्व

VIŚVA

Visva: All, every, every one. Whole, entire, universal. All-pervading or all-containing, omnipresent. The faculty that perceives individuality.

Practice

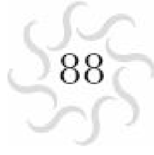
At some point in a love relationship, you may find it appropriate to say, "You are mine, and I am yours." Here is a wild thought: Creation is your primary relationship. In this sutra, you are invited to talk to your Beloved, the universe, in an intimate and tender way: "I am yours, and you are mine. I am at one with you."

Visva is the faculty of perceiving individuality, so you are invited to meditate on the relationship of individuality and infinity. Your mantra here is the texture of that relationship:

> I am at home in the rivers and tides and all currents of Creation.
> I am at one with Bhairava, the consciousness that permeates everywhere.
> Everything everywhere is singing, "I AM—love me."

You could use lines such as this as a prayer of the heart.

If you are more of a scientist than a lover, you can stay in wonder and use the mystery of individuality as the focus. The fact that anything exists at all is still a great mystery. No one knows why the Big Bang occurred.



क्षोभ

KṢOBHA

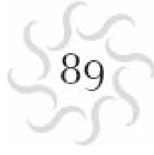
Kshobha: Shaking, trembling, agitation, disturbance, tossing, emotion. In drama, an emotion that is the cause of harsh speeches or reproaches. A strong current of water.

Practice

The technique here is to work yourself to the point of exhaustion, then throw yourself down to the ground. Surrender to gravity. Meditate on the trembling of fatigue and be born again. The mantra and the gateway is *kshobha shakti.*

There is a yoga of tiredness, thank God. And we are all good at it. Everyone I know is running themselves ragged. Being exhausted by honest work is good preparation for the *samadhi* of rejuvenation. One of the meanings of *tantra* is "extending ourselves, stretching our capacity for attention and exertion." There is a sweet science to wearing ourselves out just the right amount. This sutra focuses on the practice of wearing yourself out physically, and then, with the attentiveness of a yogi, entering shaking exhaustion and finding therein a gateway into shakti, the vibratory nature of the life-force.

Kshobha is a "strong current of water," and there is a current of OM inside the trembling. We all know the magic that happens when we lie down and surrender to fatigue: it is bliss, and you earned it. In this yukti, use the power of your yoga-enhanced attention to meditate on *kshobha shakti* and enter bliss.



अशक्त

AŚAKTA

Asakta: Unable, incompetent, powerless. This is the opposite of shakti, which is "power, powerful, mighty."

Practice

Powerlessness is a gateway. There are days when reality unravels before your eyes. You are disrupted, torn down, stripped of what you believe. Your foundation is shaken. When this happens, enter the powerlessness and use it as a focus for meditation.

Anytime you feel incompetent and ignorant, let your mind dissolve into that unknowing helplessness. You are already in the disturbance, so you may as well go all the way in with full attention. You now realize you know nothing, so become curious and melt into wonder. The forms of power you have known are gone. Now you can rebuild and learn entirely new ways of dancing with shakti.

Meditators know that when they are relaxed and at ease, the memory of painful times comes to awareness to be healed. Welcome these shocking and embarrassing memories when they come because they are teachers. If you learn from your own history, you don't need to repeat it.

Note: The phrase "unmind your mind," used in the sutra, comes from Lakshman Joo, one of the great teachers of this text, a master from Kashmir who wrote many books on Shaivism.



सम्प्रदाय

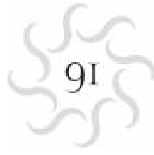
SAMPRADĀYA

Sampradaya: Tradition, sect, doctrine transmitted from one teacher to another.

Practice

Transmissions of wisdom can come quite suddenly. You might be out walking, notice a dog glancing at you, and see fifty thousand years of love and companionship in a second. You might witness the birth of a child, and you start seeing not just that particular baby being born, but also all beings everywhere being born. Standing alone at night in the wilderness, under the star field, you might see not just that particular night sky, but also beyond—stars emerging, planets coalescing. You might look at one particular thing, and suddenly the soul is detached from matter; the specific form you are seeing dissolves, and somehow you are seeing through that form into eternity. In these moments, you receive the transmission, and you feel a sense of inner freedom and happiness. We can receive these transmissions anywhere, at any time.

Sit in open spaces, with your eyes open, gazing. Receive light, color, movement, shapes, as if you were newly born to this world.



सनातन

SANĀTANA

Sanatana: Eternal, perpetual, permanent, everlasting, ancient, primeval.

Practice

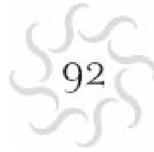
There is a song, an eternal hum, permeating all of creation. Your body is part of the universe, so it is vibrating also. At certain times in yoga practice, sports, and intense moments of living, you may become attuned to the hum of creation and be able to meditate on the sound of your own life-force resonating in the body.

The senses are designed to notice changes, not something that is steady. We don't hear what is always there. So here is a trick, a yukti: Close your ears, with your fingers or earplugs. Introduce some contraction into the lower *dvaras* or doors of the body, the muscles around the perineum, anus, and urinary passage. If you know *mula bandha* or *ashwini mudra,* this is a time to practice them. Explore what happens when you introduce pulsation—rhythmic contracting and releasing. Singers use techniques such as this to attune to their own note and amplify the resonance of their voice.

Now simply listen. Be open to whatever you are hearing. Let the vibration of your own life-force teach you about itself. There may be a quiet sound, like a stream flowing—the current of life. You might sense it as silence, as radiance, as a vibration that is not a sound, but just a feeling or a hum. Welcome the unexpected song. The primordial chord that began resonating before you were born, *sanatana,* sustains you continually and is always here. This is home. You already know this sound; simply return to rest in the Unstuck Chord.

You may not need to actually plug your ears each time. Your attention may go inside naturally as soon as you invite the internal sound.

This practice can happen spontaneously in lovemaking. As the charge of energy builds and builds, the muscles at the base of the pelvis contract rhythmically, and you may find yourself in the palace of the Creator, listening to the hum of life. Again we see how in yoga we cheerfully accept every part of the body, every nerve center, and every tube or opening in the body as invaluable for enlightenment.



चित्तलय

CITTALAYA

Citta: Noticed, aimed at, longed for, appeared, visible, attending, observing, thinking, reflecting, imagining, thought, intention, wish, aim, the heart, mind, memory, intelligence, reason. In astrology, the ninth mansion. *Laya:* The act of clinging to, to become attached to someone, to disappear, be dissolved or absorbed. Lying down. Melting, dissolution. Rest, repose. Sport, diversion, merriness. Delight in anything. An embrace. The union of song, dance, and instrumental music. A pause. A swoon.

Practice

In meditation, we court the experience of mind dissolving into nothingness. It’s restful, and when we come back to ourselves, it’s an embrace, a party, the union of song, dance, and instrumental music—a Bollywood musical!

Dissolving can be intense and scary. Adventures in the outer world can prepare us for the swoon of *cittalaya.* Looking into depths, such as wells and canyons, can give us a chance to practice relaxing into the fear of falling. Roller coaster rides are intense and exhilarating. In some sports, you give in to the drop. In snowboarding, skiing, surfing, base jumping, and parachuting, you fall into the gravity well and steer.

Outdoor explorers and athletes encounter meditative states in the course of their daring adventures. They glow as if they were on a meditation retreat, but they can’t tell you why. They are encountering *cittalaya* in an informal way. It happens so instantaneously that they wouldn’t be so bold as to say they are meditating, but their minds are dissolved in delight.

If you are fortunate, you have come across some phenomenon that makes you feel as if the ground beneath your feet were opening up—a moment of intense love, a great musical or theatrical performance, the divine streaming through someone, a magnificent act. You are encountering something so brilliant that all your thoughts fall away.



अवस्था

AVASTHĀ

Avastha: To go down into, to reach down to; to go away from; to take one's stand; to stay, abide, stop at any place; to abide in a state or condition; to remain or continue (doing anything). To be found, exist, be present. To fall to, fall into the possession of. To enter, be absorbed in. To penetrate, as sound. To be settled or fixed or chosen. To cause to stand or stop (as a carriage or an army). Appearance (in a court of justice). Stability, consistence. State, condition, situation (five are distinguished in dramas). The female organs of generation.

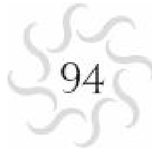
Practice

This is a God-consciousness technique. People often think of meditation as stilling the mind and stopping the flow of thought. This sutra invites you to consider the opposite.

Avastha, reach down into your deepest being. Take a stand in divine consciousness. See the whole world from inside this state. Perceive everything as the functioning of the divine, the Mysterious All-Pervading One. If you don't like religious terminology, you can use the Mystery of Whatever Set the Laws of Nature in Motion.

The sutra begins with *yatra yatra,* "wherever your mind wanders, in the outside objective world or your inner secret world," and *tatra tatra,* "there is the gracious, friendly, benevolent universal consciousness." The skill here is to find a way to rest in the knowledge that "wherever your mind moves, you are moving with the One Infinite Life."

Minds wander—that's what they do. Hearts are always looking for love. The heart, by design, longs to be in the rhythm of giving and receiving. Life is flow and motion. Both mind and heart want to connect with the essence of life, and *yoga* means "connection." Attention is dynamic by nature, always on a quest. In this practice, the yoga is in the wandering and searching. We are called to honor all this questing as *yatra,* a pilgrimage.



भरिता

BHARITA

Bharita: Nourished, full.

Practice

We need food of many kinds. There is the food we eat with our mouths. There is also food for thought, food for the soul, and nourishment for our hungry hearts. There is something nourishing about good music—it is a kind of food. And there is a nourishing quality to simple sensuality, like walking in nature, with the sun shining on your skin and the wind ticking the hairs on your arms. Certain people are nourishing to be around.

We are invited here to let our meditation practice be nourishing in all these ways.

The technique is to receive all sensuous perceptions as a gift of the cosmic intelligence that is everywhere. In meditation, accept everything coming in through your channels of perception as being an emanation from infinity, and let your soul be suffused with nourishing fullness.

In meditation, pay attention to your senses and follow each one from the level on which you receive it through the channels of sensuous delight, into the soul. *Bharita,* the sense of being nourished, is accessible to you though every sensual perception. All of your senses are pathways for the divine nature of life to talk to you, sing to you, touch you, feed you, delight you, entertain you.

Start from wherever you are, and as the soul, welcome each and every sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste as a manifestation of that which is everywhere, the All-Pervading Lord. This practice may take many years, as you learn to transcend through smell, taste, touch, vision, and hearing, and other senses, such as balance and motion.



कुतूहल

KUTŪHALA

Kutuhala: Curiosity, interest in any extra-ordinary matter. Inclination, desire for. Eagerness, impetuosity. What excites curiosity. Anything interesting, fun. Surprising, wonderful. Excellent, celebrated.

Practice

This is the "there are no atheists in foxholes" sutra. The images are intense: when fleeing from battle, running so fast that your brain melts; when seized by terror, dread, dismay, or burning heartache; when totally confused; when hiding from danger in a hole in the ground, a forest, or a cave; when keeping a terrifying secret; when starving, ravenously hungry. You can wake up to the Great Spirit in the midst of any of these shocking experiences—which are about as unmeditative and unyogic as you can imagine. The throbbing intensity of your need carries you across the invisible threshold into the presence of the One Self-Existent Spirit.

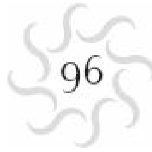
Thankfully, you can wake up in the wonderful, to *kutuhala*—"eagerness, impetuosity; anything fun and surprising." The "extraordinary matter" might be a surprising reversal that gives an underdog sports team the win. A roar of enthusiasm goes up from eighty thousand voices. You can even wake up with a sudden sneeze—*kshut!*

Meditation is surprising. There is no predicting what you will experience from one moment to the next, and this is a good thing. You'd think that if you have a busy life, your mind will be noisy during meditation, and if you have a year off, an extended vacation, your mind will be quiet. But it does not work out that way. Sometimes the exhaustion of raising kids, running a business, having a love life, makes you so perfectly tired that meditation is just bliss. And if you took a year off to sit on a hill, your brain might be busy day and night processing your past experiences. There is just no telling. All you can do is prepare your body for meditation and then accept what arises. And the best preparation for meditation is to live your authentic life, do your work, follow your passions, explore who you are, and give everything you can give to each moment.

If you have survived traumatic experiences, you will have flashbacks during meditation. When these flashes of memory occur, welcome them. They will come anyway, and if you set the table, you take charge of the interaction. Each time you access terror or dread, you have the opportunity to soothe it a bit and massage some of that fear out of your system. You may need to learn a variety of meditation practices, such as those described in this text, to create enough inner safety to meet yourself on the level of terror and trauma.

It is a great challenge to develop life-affirming experiences that are as incandescently powerful

as the traumatic ones. This sutra reminds you, “You were witness to something shocking, and you survived.”



स्मर

SMARA

Smara: Remembering, recollecting. Memory, remembrance. Recollection. A loving recollection love, especially sexual love. Kama-deva, the god of love.

Practice

This is the time-travel sutra. During meditation, a memory may grab you and carry you away. One moment you are here and the next you are *there,* in that time and place, seeing and feeling what you saw and felt then. By the mystery of memory, your *here* has been teleported to *there.*

You might be remembering a wonderful lover or longing for a land that was once home. Perhaps you are thinking of noble actions you have witnessed. You might find yourself recalling meetings with inspiring people, fantastic conversations, or moments of *shaktipat,* when you received a transmission of something great. If you met Jesus, you are supposed to remember this communion forever and eternally be in its embrace.

Technically speaking, you are using a cherished memory, *smara,* as a meditation object, in the same way you would breath, a mantra, or the chakras. As your mind and heart engage with that memory, you enter heightened awareness. You savor the *rasa*—the deliciousness and aesthetic relish—of a specific moment. Intense positive emotions—inspiration, gratitude, pride in accomplishment—are worthy of being cultivated in this way.

An odd twist in this particular memory technique is that you allow self-abandonment. *Tyaj* is "abandon, leave a place," and *tyajet svasaririam* is "abandoning your body." When we are really in love, there can be a sense of hanging suspended. We love the other person so much that love elevates us to the point that we don't really care about our body. Artists, musicians, dancers, and mothers can be this way about their bodies. If it is safe, go ahead and let yourself be carried away like this in meditation. Leave your present body behind. Leave your mind behind. Just be there in that time and space, reliving and recollecting. Here is a mystery: after a while, you may find you are floating free between worlds, flooded by divine consciousness.



शून्यालय

ŚŪNYĀLAYA

Shunyalaya: An empty or deserted house—"abode of the void."

Practice

Attention has rhythms and cycles. We focus on our tasks for a while, perhaps a couple of hours; we are on a roll. Then at some point, we realize we have been absent or daydreaming. One of the meanings of *shunya* is "absentminded." You can utilize your naturally occurring absentminded states as a meditation.

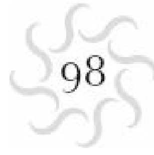
As with many of the yuktis, this meditation may occur spontaneously or it may be cultivated. *Vinyasya* here means simply "to be put or placed upon." Place your attention somewhere—just gaze at something. Then gradually, softly, allow your attention to turn within. This is something attention does by itself; you will be completely focused on something, and then without noticing it, your attention dissolves. You probably think you have spaced out, and you are right. This spaciousness is a gateway.

When you come across someone who is absorbed in this way, don't interrupt them. Stand twenty feet away or so and let them finish their reverie. After a while—usually not more than twenty minutes—they will notice you.

If you have a healthy daily meditation practice, you will space out much less during the day, because you are giving your attention time and space to refresh itself in spaciousness. The *laya* of *shunyalaya* is "delightful, refreshing." You had a vacation, and now you are back.

If meditation is *making* you spaced out, then modify your practice. Do more physical activity, meditate for a shorter period, engage your passions, and make sure you are well nourished. Find a sport you love that requires you to pay close attention and keep your eye on the ball. It takes many years to integrate *shunyalaya.*

A certain amount of meditation-induced drunkenness is normal. When you discover that everything is made out of space, you can feel like Gene Kelly in "Singin' in the Rain." You don't care that it is raining or that everyone else is hurrying to work and scowling. Life is so wonderful that you just want to gaze at that baby in the carriage. After a while, you learn to hide your drunkenness without suppressing it, to keep calm and carry on.



भक्ति

BHAKTI

Bhakti: Distribution, partition, separation. A division, portion, share. Division by streaks or lines. A row, series, succession, order. That which belongs to or is contained in anything else, an attribute. Attachment, devotion, fondness for, devotion to. Trust, homage, worship, piety, faith or love or devotion to (as a religious principle or means of salvation, together with *karman,* "works," and *jnana,* "spiritual knowledge").

Practice

During meditation you will find yourself thinking of the people you love. You will be attending to the texture—the tantra—of your relationships and feeling what is there. This is your heart vibrating and pulsing with your connection. You can transcend on *bhakti,* on love and devotion.

When you love someone, you carry them inside you and will think of them all the time, including during pranayama, *shavasana,* and meditation, even if you try not to. You can't help but be bothered by your love. Your awareness is sneaking off to practice bhakti yoga and will do so no matter what style of class you are in, no matter what you call your meditation system. In the bhakti yoga stories, otherwise honorable and diligent women (the *gopis*) are always getting up in the middle of the night and slipping away to worship Krishna down by the river. In daily life, attention steals moments of *bhakti* here and there to muse about your lover, baby, cat, dog, or creative project. Part of love is worrying about people, praying for them, attempting to find words to say what you feel. All of this is welcome in meditation.

Loving any one being, one person, expresses your devotion to your local part of the infinite universe. This is a tangible thing you can do, an act of power and creativity. The everyday practice here is to know that no matter who or what you love, this love is yoga in its most fundamental form: linking, connecting, valuing the other, honoring the relationship. There are many kinds of love, many textures of relationship, and each moves and challenges us in a different way. There is erotic love and all those wild energies of sexual devotion. There is friendship, parental love, family love, unconditional love. Every form of love is sacred; every relationship, temporary as it may be, teaches us about eternity. Bhakti yoga says that you can be in an erotic, passionate relationship with God; you can be friends and equals with God; you can even feel parental and protective of God. All rivers flow to the ocean.



वस्तु

VASTU

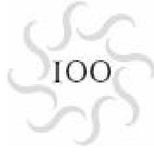
Vastu: Becoming light, dawning, morning. The seat or place of any really existing or abiding substance or essence, thing, object. In philosophy, the real (opposed to that which does not really exist, the unreal). The right thing, a valuable or worthy object. Goods, wealth, property. The thing in question, matter, affair, circumstance. Subject, subject matter, contents, theme (of a speech), plot (of a drama or poem). In music, a kind of composition. Natural disposition, essential property. The pith or substance of anything.

Practice

When you focus on something that engages your entire interest, the rest of the universe disappears. This is wonderfully peaceful.

Find something so compelling that you want to engage with it to the exclusion of everything else—at least for a while. Getting lost in something is a natural experience. Little kids do this when playing. Children of all ages can get totally absorbed in books. Teenagers get fully focused in games, sports, video games, music. *Vastu* has vast meaning—wealth, property, the plot of a drama, music, a poem. The only thing that matters is that your *vatsu* is engaging, that it calls you completely.

Yogis and meditators need to make sure they have and indulge in benevolent obsessions, whether it is a music group, romance novels, movies, games, Mardi Gras, or comic book conventions. It is healing to have your whole intellect and intuition, all your mental powers, absorbed in your area of interest, whether it is fly-fishing or martial arts. For some people, it may be gambling or shopping. Everything else in the universe drops away, and you are free. All your troubles are forgotten. Your whole being is appeased, tranquil. You are walking on air.



शुद्धि

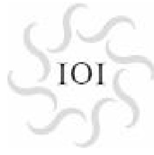
ŚUDDHI

Shuddhi: Cleansing, purification. Purity, holiness, freedom from defilement, a purificatory rite. Setting free or securing (from any danger), rendering secure. Justification, exculpation, innocence (established by ordeal or trial), acquittal. In arithmetic, leaving no remainder. One of the shaktis of Vishnu.

Practice

Following the rules, eating right, doing yoga, and meditating, you get healthier and healthier. Then one day you notice you are starting to be disgusted by everything. The world seems impure, people are impure, and food is impure. This is a dangerous side effect of practice. If you start disliking your body and being disgusted by contact with others, you can lose your primary relationships or develop eating disorders.

If you are attracted to this sutra today, it may be time to leave behind the mental preoccupations with purity and impurity and the overly obsessive thinking yogis are prone to. *Vikalpa* has many meanings, including "false notion, imagination, calculation, mental occupation." *Nirvikalpa* is "without *vikalpa.*" After a certain point in practice, you cannot afford to let other people's rules rule you.



सामान्य

SĀMĀNYA

Samanya: Equal, alike, similar. Shared by others, joint, common to. Whole, entire, universal, general, generic, not specific. Common, commonplace, vulgar, ordinary, insignificant, low. Equality, similarity, identity. Equilibrium, normal state or condition. Universality, totality, generality, general or fundamental notion, common or generic property. Public affairs or business. In rhetoric, the connection of different objects by common properties. Jointly, in general, in common.

Practice

Notice that ordinary people are full of the wisdom of life. Or you could say, "The reality of cosmic awareness is everywhere, in everyone."

A mantric phrase from this sutra you may enjoy is *sarva bhairavo bhava*—"Everywhere the infinite consciousness is becoming." *Sarva:* "everywhere, at all times, in every case." *Bhairava:* "the Terrific One, the primordial awareness." *Bhava:* "becoming, existing, manner of being, temperament, passion, emotion, love." *Sarva bhairavo bhava.*

When I first started meditating, I happened upon this perception unknowingly, and it was like stepping into another world that looked just like this one, only magical. It seemed to me that ordinary people were walking around in God consciousness. They were already in on the secret. They just got up in the morning, fed the dogs, and went to work. After my meditation teacher training, I felt that I was the one with elite knowledge. Over time, I came down off my throne, which was painful.

Regular people, who don't practice yoga or meditation, are sensible. They don't try to get their dogs to become vegetarians. Those of us who are constantly meddling with our organs of perception, dialing in new energies, are always losing our common sense. As the range of our senses increases, we are ecstatic, delighted, and expansive. We think we have discovered the secret of life, until eventually we realize that all kinds of people are already there. Dancers at the ballet know more about movement and stillness than we do. Mountaineers know more about mental silence than we do. Singers know more about breath than we ever will. Fishermen know more about patience than we do. The mother with three kids who gets everyone to school on time knows more about grace under fire than we do. If you are a yoga teacher, you may realize someday that your students know more about *shavasana* than you do. The reality of God is common to all. It is not specific to you at all. This is a cheerful, humbling perception.



सम

SAMA

Sama: Any, every. Even, smooth, flat, plain, level, parallel. Same, equal, similar, like, equivalent, like to or identical or homogenous with. Always the same, constant.

Practice

This sutra points to a daring level of equanimity requiring you to differentiate yourself from the collective trance. At one level this sutra is a heads up—a notice saying that a time may come when it is appropriate for you to rise above and beyond the opinions of others. Your inner work will have led you here. Listen to the song of life within you, make your choices, go your way, and leave behind the whole struggle to be hip and to avoid being uncool.

The Sanskrit here sounds like the plot of a daytime soap opera: *mana* means "opinion, arrogance, indignation excited by jealousy (especially in women), sulking; a blockhead, an agent, a barbarian." When you are established in inner equanimity, it's all the same *(sama)* to you, whether the players like you or not.

Keep in mind that everyone will still have their opinions, and may feel indignant about your aloofness and superiority. They may sense that you are not obeying the herd, and they may be envious. Envy is the desire to have what the other has, so some part of them wants this freedom. Bless them on their path.

This sutra is a hint to keep favoring the inner happiness that percolates up from your deepest *bhava* ("becoming, being, existing, turning or transition into") during meditation. Allow joy, pleasure, delight, and ease to keep on permeating your being, and let the soap opera continue on its own, without you. Let the other characters in the soap opera continue on their own without you; they will be fine.



ब्रह्मन्

BRAHMAN

Brahman: The one self-existent spirit, the Absolute.

Practice

While you are meditating, images and sensations of what you like and dislike will arise, calling your attention, inviting you to mix it up somehow. Instead of taking sides, explore the texture of the middle spaces, all the nuances of energy and emotion. *Brahma,* the one self-existing spirit, witnesses all qualities and is not bound by them.

Set everyone free. Set yourself free from your previous dislikes and likes. Let your brain reboot. Start fresh from this moment. Everyone and everything are part of *brahman,* the Absolute. Everything you have ever perceived is an intrinsic part of how you arrived here, in this moment. You do not need to be bound by the coloring, *raga,* that you put on things in the past. That was then. This is now. Deliver yourself from the trap of believing all those evaluations. *Mukta* is "let loose, set free, delivered, emancipated." Let all those prisoners out of jail.

Get intimate with the continuum of infinite variability between the extremes. There is wide-open space here in the middle, a spaciousness embracing all human emotion. Dislike or passion, these are notes on the keyboard; know and appreciate all octaves. You are not just one set of notes; you are the player of notes, and you are the Great Silence from which the notes emerge.

A caution: this practice gives you the power to make yourself into a completely bland person with no *raga,* no passion, whatsoever. It is like becoming tasteless white bread, distilled water—no salt, no spice, no taste, no minerals. This is a gateway to depression and emotional malnutrition. Your healthy adaptation to life depends on having a rich life of passion appropriate to your unique character, your age, and your life path. Are you on the path of renunciation or the path of intimacy? Celibates need to dissolve passion. If you are married, dissolving passion will just destroy your marriage.

During this meditation, your passions will tend to melt into peace. During your everyday life, stay close to your preferences and encourage your likes and dislikes.



बोध

BODHA

Bodha: Knowing, understanding, waking, becoming or being awake, opening of a blossom, blooming. Taking effect (of spells). Exciting (a perfume). Perception, apprehension, thought, knowledge, understanding, intelligence, consciousness. Awakening, arousing. Making known, informing, instructing.

Practice

This is an invitation to appreciate the knowing that is beyond objects. Consciousness wakes up and blossoms, *bodha,* into intimacy with that which cannot be grasped. This is a stage of transcending that usually flashes by in a fraction of a second, as everything you think you know dissolves into space, *shunya.* Even if this awareness lasts a flicker of time, it is still valid and, over time, will continue to blossom. Take a breath and inhale its perfume.

Notice what happens when you come up to the edge of your understanding, the limits of perception. Get to know what it is like to fall off the edge of the world into emptiness, no-thing-ness. Some phases of meditation are very much like training in any sport; the coach has you do exercises to refine your skill and reduce effort. In this sutra, the tendency to grasp, to try to grab hold of knowledge, is replaced with spaciousness. Gently, gently, you let the body and mind get used to how wonderful it is to know nothing.

The last word of this verse is *bodhasambhava,* a beautiful mantra to use as a reminder. *Bodha,* "blossoming, awakening, arousing." *Sambhava,* "together, coming together, union, intercourse, sexual intercourse, acquaintance, intimacy." *Bodha sambhava:* to come into intimacy with pure consciousness.



समावेश

SAMĀVEŚA

Samavesa: To enter together or at once, meeting, penetration, absorption into. Co-existence.

Practice

This is a fancy version of what kids do for fun—lying on their backs in the grass and looking up at the cloud-filled daytime sky or star-filled night. Gaze at the all-pervading spaciousness and with your awareness enter *samavesa,* the vastness.

Place your mind in outer space, *bahya akasha.* Reach out and touch the stars with your awareness. Then enter the vastness of the cosmos and know it as your home. This is not just a metaphor. This is a physical reality—your molecules came from space, from the exhalation of a primordial sun.

Bahya akasha is a beautiful sound you could use to propel your mind into outer space. *Bahya,* "being outside, outer, exterior, strange, foreign." *Akasha,* "a free or open space, a vacuum; the sky or atmosphere; the subtle and ethereal fluid supposed to fill and pervade the universe and to be the peculiar vehicle of life and of sound." Become that vehicle, flying through the space you behold.



तरङ्ग

TARAṄGA

Taranga: "Across-goer," a wave, billow, a section of a literary work that contains in its name a word like *sea* or *river;* a jumping motion, gallop. Cloth, clothes. To move like a billow, to wave about, to move restlessly to and fro.

Practice

This is a completely wacky practice: wherever the mind moves, in that moment, move on. Don't let the mind rest anywhere. Keep it jumping, keep it skipping over the top of the waves.

This sounds just like what we do anyway when we are distracted. In *Four Quartets,* T. S. Eliot used the phrase "distracted from distraction by distraction." Some days it seems like most of us are running around this way.

The Sanskrit is cute: *yatra yatra manas yati. Yatra yatra* means "wherever, whithersoever." *Manas* is mind in its widest sense—intellect, intelligence, understanding, sense, the spiritual principle, the breath or living soul, thought, imagination, desire, mood. *Yati* is "goes." You could use *yatra yatra* as a kind of fly swatter to keep the mind moving.

Each thought is a wave. One of the skills of surfing is to know how to dive under the waves so you don't get caught in the churn. In this meditation, you keep your mind skipping along the surface, free of any one wave, then you let it dive of its own accord. It's a rebound effect. You take the mind's natural motion, amplify it to exhaustion, and then let it rest in the depths, motionless and still (*nistaranga,* from *nis,* "out, forth, free from").



भया

BHAYA

Bhaya: Fear, alarm, dread, apprehension. Fear of or for. Terror, dismay, danger, peril, distress. Danger from.

Practice

When fear rises during meditation, welcome it, feel into it. Enter the vibratory world of sensations underneath that emotion.

Many of our thoughts during meditation have their origin in what we are afraid will happen. Most of the uncomfortable emotions and sensations you feel during meditation have some connection with fear, anxiety, or nervousness. This is not to be denied. Loving opens us up to loss. If we go for it in any arena and follow our passions, we put ourselves at risk. We can learn to make fear our friend.

The name of this text is the Vijnana *Bhairava* Tantra. *Bhairava* has many, many meanings, including "terrific"—the aspect of universal consciousness that accepts our terror as prayer and opens the door to revelation. Contemplating infinity can lead to terror and ecstasy at the same time. Meeting the soul is terrifying.

Therefore, terror is not shameful; it is to be embraced. Terror can be subtle, as in the recognition that life is short and you have to get on with what you are here to do and experience. The alarm goes off and propels us to wake up and seek God. Every human emotion, every impulse, is an opportunity to awaken to the immediacy of life.

Several meditations are suggested here. One could be to meditate with the phrase *bhaya sarvam,* "everyone is afraid." (*Bhaya,* "fear, alarm, dread, dismay." *Sarva,* "all, whole, entire, everyone.") Suns are probably afraid when the time comes for them to die. Who knows?

Another meditation is to use *bhairava* as a mantra, and be aware of the vast range of meanings such as, "God is here, inside my fear" and "The universe is indeed vast and terrifying, and yet permeated by a friendly consciousness. I am intimate with that One."

The trembling we feel in terror is a vibration in our bodies. Every cell is buzzing. Listen to this sound rising up from the depths of your being.



अहम्

AHAM

Aham: I.

Practice

Aham is the source of all mantras and can be heard in a variety of delightful ways—for example, as *aha* followed by *mmm.* It can also be heard as *ah* followed by *ha* and then *mmm.*

Ah! Ha! Mmmmm.

Aha! Mmmmmm.

Aaaaahhhh haaaaaaaa mmmmmmm.

These are sounds we make all the time, because we like to. We say "Ah!" in surprise, "Ha!" in laughter, and "Mmm!" in pleasure. We say "Aha!" when we have sudden insight, and we can say "Mmm, thank you, universe, for existing."

Whenever you explore your relationship to mantra as sound, use your own personal principle of onomatopoeia—the feeling that the sound is itself the meaning. You can tell what mantras are good for you by how they feel.

Aham points to the mystery of consciousness, that there is a witness to creation. *Aham* is a form of *pranava,* the primordial shout of exuberance that set the universe in motion, and is similar to OM or *Aum,* but more personal.

Sit or lie down somewhere safe and engage with the mantra *aham,* either in Sanskrit or as the English, "I am." A couple of times a minute, quietly whisper *aham* with your inner voice, subvocally, and notice what happens. Pay attention to the spaces before and after the mantra. You can ask *aham* to repeat itself within your awareness, so you can lean back and simply listen. Delicately pulsate with the sound. Do not feel you need to fill the silences; rather, allow the sound to evoke silence, to remind you of the way silence is humming with peaceful aliveness. Over time, learn to embrace *aham* with spaciousness and to tolerate the sense of individual identity existing against a background of infinity.



नित्य

NITYA

Nitya: Innate, native, one's own. Continual, perpetual, eternal. Constantly dwelling or engaged in, intent upon, devoted to, used to. The sea, the ocean. Constant and indispensable rite or act.

Practice

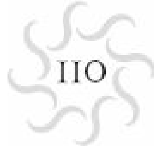
Eternity is your native state. You have choice about how you want to dwell here. You can be devoted to any quality that inspires you and engage with it continually.

This sutra invites you to inhabit your native state by immersing yourself in a mantra of your own. Ask yourself, "What quality would I love to be permeated by?" Notice what arises. Come up with one, two, or three qualities. Give them names, and use those words as a mantra. This meditation can become your constant companion.

Any quality you are craving—peace, love, harmony, joy, order, freedom, communion, creativity—is a good mantra to use. Your desire for that quality is itself a form of prayer and a shakti, an impulse of power from the depths of your being. The words to use are different for each of us, and they change over time as we evolve.

Shabda is "sound, noise, voice, tone, note; a word, speech, language; the right word, correct expression; the sacred syllable OM." When you name something you love, it becomes a mantra for you. The right word for you is an articulation of your yes to life and your version of OM in this moment.

Ask the spiritual energy you feel in the mantra to repeat itself in your heart as you move through your day. Your body will grow to love this feeling of being your own portable sanctuary. Everywhere you go you will feel at home. You are a native of eternity.



अतत्त्व

ATATTVA

Atattva: Non-essence.

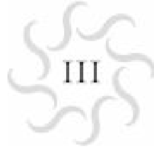
Practice

In Sanskrit, when you add a short *a* before a word, it negates the word's meaning. For example, *yoga* means "connection, union," so *ayoga* means "separation, disjunction, separation from a lover." *Tattva* has a range of meanings, including "essence; true or real state, truth, reality; the essence or substance of anything." Therefore, *atattva* means non-essence.

Say you have learned the three flows of shakti, the nine states of the soul, and all thirty-six *tattvas* of Kashmir Shaivism. Now you realize it is all a joke—that all this knowledge has no substance, no base in reality. It's *atattva.*

You have stepped behind the curtain and are witnessing the magician at play. Indra is the god of the senses, and Indra's network of the senses is how we perceive anything at all. Our bodies are permeated with an internet of miraculously functioning nerves and senses, and the brain takes many millions of bits of information every second and creates the world we perceive. This is grand magic.

Consider that the act of perceiving is a kind of lovemaking with the elements of light, sound, vibration, gravity, and the chemistry involved in smell and taste. The sutra uses the word *vraj,* "to go, walk, wander, to go to have sexual intercourse with." There is a subtle erotic sense of being tickled and teased by the great magician.



आत्मन्

ĀTMAN

Atman: To breathe. To move. To blow. The soul, principle of life and sensation. The individual soul, self, abstract individual. Essence, nature, character, peculiarity. The person or whole body considered as one and opposed to the separate members of the body. The understanding, intellect, mind. The highest personal principle of life, *brahma.* Firmness. The sun. Fire.

Practice

Contemplate your essence, your individual and peculiar self, every sensation you have ever felt, your entire sense of life, your personality, everything you understand—the wholeness of who you are. Breathe with this awareness. Adore the miracle of this tiny spark of fire existing in the midst of infinity. You are a small sun, shining forth against a backdrop of vastness.

Now contemplate infinite spaciousness and emptiness, *shunya.* The emptiness of space is so accommodating that it makes room for hundreds of billions of galaxies, each with hundreds of billions of stars, and is not crowded at all. Thus, the universe easily makes room for you, your atman, to be here and breathe and witness infinity.

What is a sun but radiance? Why can we see stars a billion light years away? Because of the utter clarity of *shunya,* emptiness, the space that allows everything to exist. Outer space is so clear that there are particles or waves of light touching the earth's atmosphere right now that originated in the ecstasy of ancient suns, which no longer exist. The clarity of space allowed those little photons to travel across the universe and make it here, bringing their message, "I was once part of a sun. Now I give my light to you."

Only atman knows these things from the inside. Only the soul knows the soul. The questing mind goes silent in awe of infinity.



प्रतिबिम्ब

PRATIBIMBA

Pratibimba: The disc of the sun or moon reflected (in water). A reflection, reflected image, mirrored form. A resemblance or counterpart of real forms, a picture, image, shadow.

Practice

For the Great Self, there is neither bondage nor liberation. *Na me bandha, na moksha me:* "Not for me bondage; neither am I liberated. I was never lost in the first place."

Bhairava, the One Who is Enjoying Everything Everywhere, is saying, "The sun reflects off the water. If the angle shifts and you do not see the reflection, does that mean the sun has gone away? You have the power to form conceptions, to make mental models of the world. If you make a model that says you are separate from Me, does that mean I have gone somewhere? When your *buddhi,* your power of forming conceptions, forms the idea that you are separate, isolated and lonely, you become terrified. The universe then seems like a dangerous place."

The concepts of bondage and liberation are scary (*bhita:* "frightened, alarmed, terrified, timid, afraid of or imperiled by, anxious about"). Terror is part of the path. The name *Bhairava* itself means "frightful, terrible, horrible, formidable." When you become scared, use that as energy for your awakening.

Know that your essence is not trapped in this body. You are not bound by the space-time continuum. The soul, that which you seek, is not trapped in matter.

Engaging with the Sutras

There are many ways to explore the Radiance Sutras and develop a meditation practice with them. One way is just to show up and dive in. Read them once in a while and let them influence your *pranashakti,* your life force, in the background. Another way is to develop a relationship with one of the sutras and spend time with it on a regular basis. You can ask your inner wisdom to lead you to the right sutra and teach you the most useful way to play with it.

Here are a few more hints for cultivating a healthy and life-affirming meditation practice with the sutras.

Respect the power of your love. Answer the call of the sutras you love. It is powerful to spend even one minute being in the presence of what you adore.

Make yourself at home. One of the great gifts of meditation is learning how to be at home in yourself and in the world. As you come in and explore your relationship with these practices, be welcoming and nonjudgmental toward yourself.

Open embrace is the style of attention called for in most of these 112 practices. This is the opposite of concentration. The posture is that of opening your arms wide to the universe and to your inner world.

Be playful. The word *lila* (pronounced *leela*) is Sanskrit for play and amusement—and the sense that the universe has been manifested as an act of play by the divine. As you engage with these tantric techniques, give yourself permission to be at play, so that you can find your individual path in meditation.

Be gradual. Allow yourself to gradually become familiar with a sutra. Notice where in your body you respond to the images and sensations that the text evokes. When you practice, delight in the gentle progression from the outer level of experience to the interior, intimate levels. This may take only a few seconds, but it's gradual. The text uses the word *sanais,* "quietly, softly, gently, gradually."

Ride your rhythms. When you practice with these sutras, there will always be flow and fluctuations in the *pranashakti,* the vibrant energy of your body-mind system. Your experience will change second by second, and many sensations, emotions, mental pictures, remembered conversations, dreamlike thoughts, desires, and energy sensations will come and go. The waveless state usually lasts only a second or two. Welcome it all, then return to your focus in an effortless way. Yogis often go through an entire mythic journey in a few minutes—Hearing the Call to Adventure, Refusal of the Call, Crossing the First Threshold, the Road of Trials, Meeting the Mentor, Seizing the Elixir, Resurrection, and the Return to the Ordinary World. Meditative experience is often intense.

Ask questions of life. Practicing tantra does not mean imposing techniques upon yourself. An attitude of wonder and inquiry is one of the greatest skills you can develop. Cherish your questions, and then be alert so that you can see, feel, and listen to life's responses.

Be succinct. In exploring what you love in a certain sutra, feel into what is the most wonderful word or phrase for you today. When you say or think those one or two words, the whole sutra will

be there, vibrating. There are times when shorter is better. You can select an English or a Sanskrit word or phrase, welcome it into your awareness, and cherish it.

Learn by heart. When you find a sutra, a line, or a phrase that resonates with you, memorize it. Learn it by heart. In this way, you can close your eyes and let it roll through your awareness. Remembering is *smara,* loving recollection.

Learn what effortlessness is. When you allow your attention to be called to something you love, the flow is natural. Effortlessness is a great skill and emerges spontaneously from operating in accord with your essence, your *prakriti* (your essential nature). Effort comes in only when you try to block out thoughts, sensations, or emotions.

Find what works for you. There is no one prescription for a meditation practice. Some people are able to practice the sutras' techniques on the fly, as they move through life. They can enter and exit meditative states within seconds, almost invisibly. I love to meditate for half an hour in the morning and again late in the afternoon. Other people make time for meditation every couple of days or on weekends. The main thing is to explore, test what works, and don't make yourself feel bad for not fitting into an imagined ideal.

Don't do too much. Get used to enjoying yourself. Begin with a minute or two of practice. Over days, learn to stay in the practice for a few minutes longer. Twenty minutes of meditative rest is very powerful. Spend a year or two getting used to the effects of meditating for twenty or twenty-five minutes in the morning and evening before going longer. This is just a guideline, though; if you are teaching yoga or doing healing work, you may find that you need to meditate more, to keep your energy field shimmering.

Honor the no. Not all of these practices are for everybody. The Vijnana Bhairava Tantra is a mini encyclopedia of yoga meditation techniques. Some will call you to come in and play. Some will be scary. Others will just not feel like *you,* so feel free to simply ignore them. Saying no creates a container, a boundary, leading to the possibility of a profound yes at some other time. A healthy relationship includes the freedom to say, "No, not right now."

The skills of meditation are the skills of loving anyone or anything. Meditation is not a separate set of skills apart from living and loving people, places, and things. In your inner life, learn to hold yourself as skillfully as a cook holds a spatula, a cellist holds a cello, a singer holds a note, a mother holds a baby—think of how lightly and yet firmly, how stable and yet responsive the holding is in each situation. The holding changes continually in response to the changing situation. The skills of meditation are like this in a subtle way: you are holding and releasing thoughts, emotions, sensations, and perceptions.

Allow yourself to rest in the truth of your being. When you are attending to a sutra that speaks to you, there will be waves of exhilaration and restfulness—the power of outward expression of your truth and the power of resting in your being. Both will evolve over time. As you learn to rest in your essence, a special, almost magical kind of meditative rest will develop. This aspect of the physiology of meditation has been researched extensively at Harvard Medical School and other universities over the past forty years. Meditative rest is a type of rest deeper than deep sleep.

Meditation is not making the mind quiet. It is tolerating all the noise without resistance and discovering the silent depths. Meditation is not sitting still. It is enjoying your motion on all levels, including the subtle levels, where stillness and exquisite motion seem to be one and the same.

Honor your individuality, for it is a great mystery. Everybody has a different style of engaging the forces of life as they flow through the *nadis* (energy arteries), chakras (rotating wheels of energy), and muscles. The song Bhairava and Devi are singing to each other is one of intimacy with energy. These practices lead to an intensified relationship with the life pulsating within and around us. Cherish the differences between you and others, for intimacy is based on an appreciation of differences as well as commonality.

Be tender toward your wounds and all that you feel is flawed, broken, or defective in yourself. As the sutras say, these wounds are gateways to infinity. Allow the life-giving prana to circulate freely in your being and body and to heal the places you are ashamed of, the places that ache.

Check in with your inner child. Take time to daydream about your childhood quiet times, your forts and secret places, those times when you spoke to the sky and earth, for in these times and places, you were natural and untamed.

Take naps. If you have been playing with the sutras for a while, you may find that your naps become sublime and feel like meditation. These catnaps can create a feeling of being drenched in rejuvenation and healing. Many of us have a sleep deficit, and the more you pay that off, the more you can enter deep states of meditation.

Use all your senses. You have a dozen senses, maybe more—vision, hearing, smell, taste, touch, plus senses of joint position, balance, motion, stretching, lung inflation, blood pressure, hunger (blood sugar), thirst (hydration), and perhaps magnetoception (the ability to sense magnetic fields). Each sense is a way of being in contact with the vibrating, pulsating field within which we are dancing. Learn all your senses, practice using them, engage with them in pranayama (breathwork), asana (movement), *dharana* (holding a thought), and *dhyana* (appreciation), and daily life. Become intimate with the full range of each sense and delight in the nuances and combinations.

Get elemental. Space, fire, air, earth, water, are the general *tattvas,* or elements. The Vijnana Bhairava Tantra invites you to develop your own playful and informal relationship with each element, as it pulsates in the *outer* world and *within* you. Learn to be intimate with each element with each of your senses—the *sight* of water flowing, the *sound* of waves, the *smell* of the air near rivers and oceans, the *taste* of anything you drink, the *touch* of the shower water all over your skin. Find your favorite experiences and continually cultivate and expand your list.

Be instinctive. Learn also to relate to each element with each of your instincts, of which you have many: homing, exploring, trail-making, resting, nesting, feeding, bathing, forming communities, pair bonding, mating, playing, self-expression, protection, and others. So you can, for example, *rest* with fire, as in luxuriating in the presence of a candle or fireplace. You can be *fed* by fire, in the form of the heat that cooks your food. You can *bathe* in fire, in the form of sunbathing or just exposing your skin to the sun. You can experience an erotic relationship with sunlight when hiking or doing outdoor sports. Everything you do in the outer world to enrich your sensuous perception of the elements will also enrich your inner world when you are practicing meditation.

Welcome infinite variety. A healthy meditation practice involves welcoming the free flow of all elements, with all your senses engaged, and all of the instincts free to give their gift. The combinations and permutations are as vast as the stars in the sky, and in this way, each moment of

meditation is novel, startling, and fascinating. You enter a lively peace born of embracing life in its fullness, and your body, your perception, and your spiritual practice will be continually refreshed. Let each of your senses delight in each of the elements, in every instinctive tone; this is a healthy practice.

Welcome your emotions. To the degree that you open your heart to life, you will feel flooded by emotions of all kinds. Each emotion is a world of energy flows and sensations throughout the body. Some of the major moods described in the yoga literature include laughter *(hasya),* erotic love or lust *(rati),* sorrow *(soka),* anger *(krodha),* enthusiasm *(utsaha),* fear or terror *(bhaya),* disgust *(jugupsa),* and astonishment *(vismaya)*. We can see these emotions as a color wheel, a mandala; each one has its place and its gift to give to the vibrancy of life. It is not necessarily a good meditation if you are sitting there feeling peaceful the whole time. A good meditation means you get what you need to thrive in your life.

Cherish nuance. Blue light oscillates at around six hundred trillion times a second; red light, only four hundred trillion times a second. Green light is in between, in the five hundred trillion range. Yet we can easily perceive the difference; our senses have evolved to notice and utilize the various frequencies, all these tiny wiggling energies. We also sense nuances of emotion. We sense the subtle differences between worry, regret, discouragement, envy, weariness, depression, anxiety, grief, shame, agitation, despair, impatience, and indignation. We distinguish between lust, love, adoration, and admiration. Some nuances are fleeting, lasting a fraction of a second; others demand your attention for a long time.

Noticing emotion may involve detecting many processes within the body and around the body. We are simultaneously gauging our hormonal and muscular situation, along with assessing what is going on in our outer world. We interpret all this information and attempt to shape prana, our natural energies, to respond to the life situation. Be inviting, accepting, and friendly toward your moods in all their varieties. Each is a form of the life force, prana, as it flows.

Welcome emotional release. An intimate relationship with *pranashakti,* the energies of life, is like any relationship—you laugh and you cry. Therefore, welcome thoughts and emotional release as an intrinsic part of the process. Crying and laughing may not seem meditative, but they are cleansing, nourishing, and rejuvenating, and signs of a healthy meditation. The heart and the chakras (the instinctive centers of the body, such as the sexual area, solar plexus, heart, throat, and head) get to reboot themselves, start afresh. Chronic muscular tension blocks the flow of prana and emotion in the body, and as you let go of that tension, you may find you have a backlog of emotions to tend to. Get good at this tending. If it's all too wild, work with a mentor who is adept at dealing with emotion.

Savor your emotional experience. When we attend to the flow of emotion with the skills of yoga, there is the possibility of transmutation. The raw experience of life becomes refined. Erotic energies lead to a lovemaking between body and soul. Angry energies turn to the element of fire. Sorrow leads to compassion. Humor leads to levity, a light heart. Even the most base emotions, when we engage with them as yogis, can turn to gold. We extract the essence, the juice, or *rasa,* of experience, and bliss, *ananda,* emerges. Attending to the energy flows in the body is similar to witnessing a movie, play, or dance performance: you are witnessing the play of life as you. As you cherish your experience in this way, you can spend more time in wonder, awe, and peacefulness.

Write your own sutras. Give yourself the opportunity to speak and write from inside your

own current of perception. There is a flavor, a style, of sensing the energies of life that is unique to you, and your world needs it.

Don't put your enlightenment outside of you—not in India, in the past, in the future, in gurus or experts. Honor the revelations that come from your own direct living experience.

Note the difference between the path of denial and the path of intimacy. In the past, yoga was the domain of males who practiced a particular asana toward life—*sannyasana,* "throwing down, laying aside, giving up, resignation, renunciation of worldly concerns." Those who practice this posture toward life are called *sannyasin,* or renouncers, and they generally take vows of celibacy, poverty, and obedience to their superiors in the tradition. The ideal is to be poor and homeless and yet free within, as well as free to practice yoga and meditation all day. This is the ancient path, and it was profound; the energy that would otherwise go into raising children and running a business goes into practicing and preserving the knowledge of meditation. Historically, almost all meditation texts were composed by male renouncers, and so the language system and techniques were shaped for their lifestyle of detachment and denial. All of us who practice meditation today owe these renouncers a debt of gratitude. They kept the faith.

In the modern Western world, yoga is practiced mostly by women and men who live in the world and have families and jobs. This is the path of intimacy, and in many ways it is the opposite of renouncing. Those on the path of intimacy work *with* attachment, desire, and responsibility, honoring and embracing each aspect of life, as time, energy, and ethics permit; their yoga evolves though love, work, play, and honoring the bonds of friendship and family. Instead of taking vows of celibacy, poverty, and obedience, those on the path of intimacy experience sexual relationships, work to generate wealth, and explore the play of independence and cooperation with others.

Always practice in accord with your inner nature, whether you are on the path of denial or the path of intimacy.

Give up altogether on judging your experience. During meditation, your brain and body are running maintenance programs. There is a lot of healing going on. Often you will be hurting and feeling your exhaustion. If you were an athlete getting a massage, you wouldn't say, "It was a bad massage because the therapist was rubbing my sore muscles."

Make peace with thoughts. If you are going to meditate, make peace with the flow of thought. The brain is always making connections, whether you are meditating or not. Hundreds of thoughts come and go every hour; this is what brains do. When you close your eyes and pay attention, you may become vividly aware of the intricate lightshow that manufactures all we see, hear, feel, think, and sense. If you are not willing to make peace with thoughts, then do something else for your development. Get into dance or sports. Take singing lessons. Learn an instrument.

Don't enforce a speed limit. You don't have to write yourself speeding tickets. Eyes and brains work fairly rapidly: third-grade students generally read two-to-three words per second, and college students average over seven words per second. When you are meditating, you might have seven perceptions per second. Not a problem. People often talk about meditation as slowing down. Consider the opposite: appreciating how fast attention moves. Even though your awareness might be vibrating rapidly, your body and your breathing will often slow down if you are doing one of the sitting or lying down meditations. A speeding mind and slow body can happen simultaneously.

Welcome your wildness. There a meme in children's cartoons in which someone opens a door, discovers a monster roaring "RAAAARRRGH!" and then slams the door and shudders. This

shows up in adult movies also: the characters are in a quiet room and walk outside into a tornado of human activity. When some people close their eyes to meditate, they immediately sense wildness and feel out of control. This is not a failure to meditate; it is a glimpse of the astounding reality that is always here.

Cultivate the opposite. If you are in love with one side of a polarity—outside-inside, dancing-stillness, visual-tactile, passion-serenity, wildness-peacefulness, freedom-discipline, independence-communion—begin to inquire into the joy of the opposite, which will arise anyway. Yoga flows between the polarities—breathe out then breathe in, turn toward the left then turn toward the right, bend forward then bend back. Train yourself to think in terms of the balance between opposites and the continuum of energies flowing between the poles. Tolerating the play of opposites is called *tapas* in yoga and valued because this builds strength.

Look at art, listen to music, read poetry, and dance. The arts, including the expressive arts, speak of the sacred, each one in its own way. Art educates the senses and creates community, sharing revelations with others around the world throughout time. Whenever possible, attend live events, openings, and performances, for artists of all kinds are yogis in the sense of being utterly devoted to bringing forth onto the earth the revelation of truth and beauty. Artists seek to articulate, each in their own medium, the resonance of *pranashakti* in our times, the unfolding revelation. Be in the presence of artists—musicians, singers, dancers, painters. Know that the attention you bring is a blessing to them, as you appreciate their work from a deep place within.

Develop expression commensurate with your communion. Learn to express yourself from inside your ecstatic energy flows and sacred spaces; otherwise, the energies you awaken will just ache. Expression takes the form of movement of all kinds, including dance, sports, and speaking from inside the current of your passion. *Mudra* is soul-infused movement, and *mantra* is evocative speech.

Get coaching on your meditative practices. For example, I'm a meditation coach, and I enjoy working with people in person, on the phone, and by email. When you work one-on-one with a coach, you and your coach can honor your individual experience.

Be open to teachers. The best teacher for you on any given day may be the one who embodies the quality you are craving the most, and they may teach in ways other than words. A massage therapist, vocal coach, wilderness guide, or an instructor of dance, art, yoga, breathing, surfing, or martial arts may be your inspiration.

Stay in touch. There are lovers of life around every corner. Find others who share the same enthusiasm as you. (One way is to sign up for my mailing list; see my website to do so.)

Come to workshops with us at yoga and retreat centers worldwide. Don't think, "Oh, everyone is more advanced than me," or "I don't have the right yoga pants to wear." You are always welcome. Take our online courses or download audio programs to stay tuned in to the community of others exploring The Radiance Sutras.

POSTLUDE



THE LAB

One day in 1968, when I was a freshman at the University of California, I signed up to participate in a brain-wave biofeedback study. Learning to control your brain waves by looking at flashing lights sounded interesting. Also they paid more than I was making mowing the greens at a nearby golf course. Due to the flip of a coin, I was selected to be a control subject in the study, meaning that I received no instructions whatever; I was just hooked up with electroencephalogram (EEG) wires stuck all over my head and left in total darkness and total silence, in a soundproofed room in the physiology lab, for two to three hours at a time, every day for several weeks.

At the time, I had never heard of meditation. Not knowing what else to do, I simply paid attention to what was going on. Gradually my senses opened up in ways that I had no words to describe. My sense of self melted into the dark. I merged with blackness and infinity and entered a world of spacious peace. Space itself seemed to be made out of harmony.

Walking out of the lab each afternoon, I felt refreshed and wonderful. It was as if my entire previous life had taken place in a mild sleep state, and now I was fully alert. It was as if I had never seen the world before, and everything alive seemed to glow, especially the trees. I began to appreciate every detail of light, every touch of air, every sound, with extraordinary clarity. Light itself seemed soluble, an elixir I was drinking in through my eyes and the pores of my skin.

I would have been astonished, but the intensity was balanced by a magnificent serenity. I was drenched in moving peacefulness. The perceptions seemed natural—this is the way the world has always been—but I had been too oblivious to notice.

I was delighted. The feeling was similar to the peaceful joy of surfing, but more intense and steady. I felt like myself, but this was a self I had never spent time in before. I was very much in my body, aware of the current of life flowing through me, and at the same time I could feel an extended sense of touch reaching out in all directions. I was in love with existence.

The experiment continued for weeks. I enjoyed going to the lab each afternoon and sitting there in the dark for hours, then walking out into the light and discovering a new world. I got used to living in this free and open state in which I just breezed through tasks that previously had been chores.

I noticed that even taking calculus tests was easy; my mind was lucid, and I could remember a formula that I had glanced at the night before, then derive its applications right there during the test.

The heightened sensing and superb functioning lasted for a month or so after the experiment

was over. It was a continuous and self-maintaining state. Then it started to fade away, and I missed it.

The physiology lab seemed like an interesting place, and I needed a job, so I started to work there. At a meeting one afternoon, a female graduate student read from the Vijnana Bhairava Tantra, just a few lines of the conversation between Shakti and Shiva. Her words vibrated in the air with brilliance. After the meeting was over, I asked her about it. She handed me the book, a paperback copy of *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones* by Paul Reps. It was open to a page:

> Radiant one, this experience may dawn between two breaths. After breath comes in (down) and just before turning up (out)—*the beneficence.*
>
> As the breath turns from down to up, and again as breath curves from up to down—through both these turns, *realize.*
>
> Or, whenever inbreath and outbreath fuse, at this instant touch the energyless energy-filled *center.*

As I read that, a quiet happiness filled my being. This description felt intimate and familiar, an echo of my experience in the lab. An electric current lit me up from the inside out, everywhere in my body. In one instant, everything changed. I was standing there in the lab, but the world was full of new possibilities, because the words in the book spoke to the heart of what happened during those hours in the dark room and afterwards. I immediately jumped into my car and drove to the nearest bookstore to buy the book. Standing there in the bookstore, I read:

> Wandering in the ineffable beauty of Kashmir, above Srinagar I come upon the hermitage of Lakshmanjoo. It overlooks green rice fields, the garden, of Shalimar . . . Water streams down from a mountaintop. Here Lakshmanjoo—tall, full bodied, shining —welcomes me. He shares with me this ancient teaching from the Vigyan Bhairava and Sochanda Tantra, . . . and from it Lakshmanjoo has made the beginning of an English version. It presents 112 ways to open the invisible door of consciousness.

Hmm, I thought, so there is a teacher by the name of Lakshman Joo who lives this teaching, and he says there are many doors to consciousness and each one can be practiced.

In this way, my first taste of the revelations the Vijnana Bhairava Tantra came from sitting in silence and darkness, with no knowledge of meditation. The next came through the written word, the sense of being electrified by the current of power behind the words of Lakshman Joo and Paul Reps. It was obvious to me that they were writing from inside the same pulsating current of life force that I was being introduced to.

My experience in the lab taught me that meditative attention occurs spontaneously. From the Bhairava Tantra I learned that there are many pathways into meditation. Learn to shift your attention slightly, and you will find them, and you will find the ones that are *svanurupa,* suited to your character (“natural, innate, well suited”). The life force flowing through the body invents

techniques as needed—just tune in. These two insights, of the instinctive naturalness of meditation and the tremendous variety of approaches, have been guiding and inspiring me ever since.

In 1969, as part of various research projects at the university, I started teaching meditation. When people would come for instruction, I asked them to tell me about their natural "meditative" kinds of experiences: "When have you felt peaceful, glad to be alive?" I found that as they spoke, they would enter the meditative states they were talking about. After an hour or ninety minutes of listening in this way, I would ask them to browse through the Vijnana Bhairava section of *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones* and show me which of the practices they recognized as being natural to them, or which they just were interested in. Whichever one they selected, we would work together to develop that into a daily practice for them.

In 1970, I was trained as a teacher of Transcendental Meditation (TM) by Maharishi Mahesh Yoga. TM utilizes several of the practices in the Bhairava Tantra and is an elegant system. After completing the teacher training, I immediately went on to three months of advanced training. At Maharishi's suggestion, I spent twenty-eight days in total darkness, from full moon to full moon. From before dawn to early evening, I would flow through asana, pranayama, and meditation, over and over. During that time, I found that my body was also flowing through the 112 practices of the Vijnana Bhairava Tantra. Each of the practices would arise as needed then fade into the background. After a week or so in the dark, there were moments and days of pure terror, in which I was face to face with what felt like ultimate destruction.

When you become silent in meditation, you are, whether you know it or not, inviting all the noise in your soul to come to the surface to be resolved and turned into harmony. If you have any traumas, they invite themselves to come to awareness and be healed. If there is anything to have flashbacks about, they come, because this is the best possible situation for them to flash back and forth and reoccur until their healing purpose has been fulfilled. This happens whether you want it to or not. I did not want it to, but I wanted to be healed and integrated, feel at home in the world, and be free of the profound loneliness aching in my soul.

Out of the silence arose a flood of memories, a continuous stream of the storehouse of impressions. I relived my entire life over and over, backward and forward, with particular focus on everything painful. Attention would zoom in on a moment of pain or agony, amplify it, then zoom out to embrace the solar system and this blessed little ocean-covered rock we are on. Then again, awareness would focus in, like a microscope, on another painful memory encoded in my muscles or senses. I viewed it from inside, then all around, then backward, then forward, amplifying, amplifying, intensifying beyond all limits of endurance, until I finally let go and let the pain have its way with me, which felt like dying. This process was merciless and thorough—no molecule went untouched. The pain became elemental, like a blowtorch, intolerable, heating up the atoms of my being. At other times I felt like a lump of coal being crushed by the earth for an eternity, but there was no sense of slowly being turned into a diamond.

For the first two weeks, I wanted to run screaming out of the room. Maharishi had instructed me to just "feel de body," stay with the sensations, so that's what I did. The pain got worse and worse until it was the only thing in the universe. Finally, out of desperation, I relaxed into being the space that embraces this solar system. Within this sphere, the earth is just a grain of sand, held lovingly in the orbit of the sun. This went on over and over, relentlessly, until every trauma was healed, every harm forgiven, every agony erased.

I noticed that my body was meeting each impossible demand with one of the brilliant methods of the Vijnana Bhairava Tantra. Each blast of flame, sensation of being crushed, encounter with terror, or feeling of being ripped apart molecule by molecule required a specific skill and demanded to be met with one of the meditations described in the text. We all have survival instincts that come to us when we desperately need them. I felt that for my survival, I needed to stay in that room. When faced with each intolerable energy, I would let go into a skill, a way of welcoming the energy so that it was transmuted into something else. I had just a hint of technique, but it was just enough to allow me to stay and face everything steadily.

There came a moment, a breath, in which there was nothing left to fear, nothing anywhere in my being I had not faced. I waited for something else to arise and looked around in the inner universe with an attitude of welcoming, of "bring it on." But nothing came. There was nothing but a vacuum, an incredible, vibrating nothingness.

I took another breath.

And mind dissolved into empty space. Heart dissolved into a spaciousness that was somehow very friendly. Then I simply dissolved into vast darkness—the space embracing the solar system, with a teeny dot in the center, shining steadily.

I stayed in the room for another week, just savoring what had happened, resting in a quiet, self-sustaining, steady ecstasy as I flowed through asana, pranayama, meditation, pranayama, asana, pranayama, meditation, over and over again.

One day, some inner prompting told me it was time to emerge. I arose around 4 a.m. as usual, did asanas, and meditated. Then I walked outside and found myself in the presence of the full moon, which was extremely bright to my dark-adapted eyes. The moon was on its way to setting behind the mountains. I turned my back to it and looked out over the Mediterranean and the stars glowing above the water. I felt a deep, intimate communion with everything. After a while the horizon started to glow, and I watched and waited. When the sun rose over the sea, there was glory in the sky. When I took a breath, there was an elixir of new life in that salty air coming off the ocean. With that breath, the thought came to me from somewhere, "Now I can live." I was a changed person. I was simpler. At the same time, an ancient witness within had emerged, someone who had seen millions of sunrises and delighted in every single one.

Later that day I walked down the beach to where Maharishi was staying. I told him that I had a strong feeling that "If I could stay in the room for three years, I would become enlightened." It was such a deep yearning in my heart, in my entire being.

Maharishi chuckled, then looked at me with those fathomless eyes and said, "Go and teach, hmm?" My head dropped. He said, tenderly, "Go and teach, and come back. More advanced trainings." That was it.

Then a spiritual flashbulb went off inside, flooding my entire being in an instant.

"Thank you, Maharishi," I said. I was at peace, happy.

I knew—it was obvious—that Maharishi himself would rather be in a cave somewhere, or on a mountainside in the Himalayas, meditating, breathing the pure air, cherishing the silence. But there was a call he could not refuse: to go to the West and teach meditation. His heart had led him to be here.

When I returned to California, I moved to Laguna Beach and spent my days surfing, teaching meditation, and going to college at University of California, Irvine, in that order. For the next five

years, until 1976, I exuberantly taught TM in Southern California, primarily in Orange County and Los Angeles. I taught at UC Irvine, in various businesses, in six different high schools, and in people's homes.

During this time I was a subject in physiological research on meditation underway at UC Irvine Medical School and the University of Southern California. These studies were not fun. There were no deluxe soundproofed rooms. But I felt that I owed the meditation research community a great debt. So when a scientist would call and very politely request my participation in a study, I would almost always say yes. The location was often a physiology lab with hundreds of rats in cages along the wall, smelling of rat food, rat droppings, and ether. Here I would sit and meditate while doctors stuck needles in my veins to take blood samples and measure changes in serum cortisol or blood flow to the brain. Other times the study was intended to measure oxygen consumption or galvanic skin response or brain waves.

Having participated in the research was a great asset for teaching in the universities. When I would be lecturing and showing slides of the scientific research on meditation, professors and doctoral students would challenge the data. I could gracefully field their questions and say, "I don't know," when appropriate, and this led to an easy rapport. After a few years, a group of professors started suggesting I get a PhD, because it seemed like a natural next step for me.

I entered a PhD program in the Social Sciences Department at UC Irvine, where I studied meditators' subjective experiences and the language they use to describe these experiences. The cognitive sciences and semantic anthropology had developed wonderful tools to reveal people's inner maps of the world. I created a technique for interviewing meditators in which I would sit with them for up to two hours and listen, occasionally asking leading questions.

I interviewed meditators of all kinds, including athletes, soldiers, hunters, dancers, atheists, Zen practitioners, Buddhists, Christians, stay-at-home mothers, and rebel, do-it-yourself meditators. These were people who usually would not, in the course of things, ever talk in depth of their meditative experience. In hundreds of sessions, I invited them to enter peaceful and ecstatic states, of whatever kind they had access to, and then speak from inside the experience.

Since then, as I have been teaching (and practicing) the yogas of the Bhairava Tantra, I've spent quite a few thousand hours sitting with people in the silence as they meditate and then listening to them talk about their experience.

LISTENING TO PRANASHAKTI

Engaging with the methods of the Bhairava Tantra for forty-plus years has opened up my senses so that I can see the energy shimmering around someone who is in the process of a spiritual awakening, listen to the song of their life-force flowing, and feel the current of their individual integrity. I have learned from this that the radiance, the spiritual power of that awakening, is their real teacher. My task as a meditation guide is to help them recognize the awakening, cooperate with it, and find the appropriate meditation practice to support it.

People who are interested in meditation are often on the verge—or in the midst—of intense revelations that they do not have the skills to fully accept or the language to express. In fact, it is this awakeningin-progress that calls people to come learn about meditation. This is what teaching meditation is about. I coach people in how to accept and roll with the yoga practice that is

happening spontaneously.

Awakenings do not come uninvited, in my experience. We just forget that we've invoked them. At some point the day or year before, we asked life to lead us onto a better path, and then things shifted around in the background to make that possible. The methods, the *yuktis,* that Bhairava sings to Devi are ways that evolution gets our attention.

In my teaching, I always listen to people as much as time allows. What students say is actually more interesting than what teachers say, because in their fumbling for language, they are right on the edge of the abyss—in the uncertainty bordering on ecstasy that this text sings of. It's an unusual exploration in language, and I love it.

If you listen with silent attention and just let people speak from the heart about what they love, after a while, perhaps an hour or so, they'll tend to close their eyes and slip into meditation spontaneously. When they emerge, if you can get them to speak, what they say is drenched in vibrant peace and sounds similar to one of the practices in the Bhairava Tantra. It is as if one of the sutras is on the tip of their tongue. When someone is being called to meditate, there is often something in the 112 methods that is already vibrating in their nerves, and this is their natural technique.

When people are in ecstatic meditative states and you can get them to say something, they tend to generate simple succinct language, usually just a couple of vibrant words. "I breathe in, and I feel that life is giving me a fresh beginning," a young woman said after her first meditation session. Another woman opened her eyes and spoke from inside a vibrating silence: "I feel at home —at home in existence." That was all she said, simple and stunning. A woman who had been doing yoga for several months and was just discovering meditation said, "I feel as if I am drinking in peace through every pore of my skin." A young man looked around the room and with a mischievous sparkle in his eye said, "Everything is glowing, as if lit from within."

Two seemingly opposite qualities come together: a lively sense of pulsation and a peaceful silence. When the person I am meditating with enters this fusion, they glow with life. When I ask them to speak, to make words from within such a pulsating silence, it feels like a joke, but people usually manage a phrase or two. I call this listening to *pranashakti*—listening to the spirit becoming flesh, listening to the song being sung at the intersection of the life force with the body.

When I write down the phrases people say, there is a condensed meaning suggestive of poetry. We could say that their speech has a mantric quality; it is speech that is evocative of the inner world. The thought-impulse seems to rise up out of a field of silence, become a sensation in the body, shape itself into a few words, and then, after the words are spoken, the silence becomes louder than ever. In Radiance Sutras workshops and one-to-one sessions, people speak this way naturally, because that is what they are experiencing. The language is always surprising and fresh as it emerges from the encounter of awareness with the subtle energies flowing through the body.

TRANSLATION AS RAPTURE

One day in 1987, after I'd finished writing my doctoral dissertation, a quiet thought came to me: I should start working on a version of the Vijnana Bhairava Tantra. The words and phrases I use in *The Radiance Sutras* are inspired and informed by years of listening to how people speak when they are in contact with the soul, giving voice to *pranashakti.* They are also the result of an ongoing

dance with the living, impish language that is Sanskrit.

Much of the work was done in the hours before dawn, starting at four in the morning or earlier. I find that it is the freshest time for this type of writing. There is a vitality in the air, a wave of pure fresh energy sweeping across the earth in advance of sunrise. Writers and meditators can ride this energy.

This early morning rush has a name in Sanskrit—*brahmamuhurta,* "the time of Brahma." I have also heard it called *navaswan.* In Vedic timekeeping, this time is said to start about two hours before dawn and last for forty-eight minutes. The Sikhs also have a term to describe this time: *amrit vela,* "the ambrosial period." They feel it is an auspicious time for spiritual practice.

If you are rested and ready for it, ready to sit and enjoy the predawn quiet, *brahmamuhurta* is a treat. One moment, it is "the still of the night." Then something changes—there is a zing in the air, and the darkness is lively.

When I am in a sutra-writing cycle, I often go to bed by nine or so and get up at three or four in the morning to take advantage of *brahmamuhurta.* I pick a sutra, or it selects me, and I walk around inside it, chant it and dance with it for an hour or two, in Sanskrit and English (if I have gotten any English yet).

I first approach the text as mantra—I listen for the meaning encoded in the sequence of syllables, as one would listen to music. When you chant Sanskrit, after a while, it picks you up and carries you. When this happens, it is as if the sutra is whispering itself in the silence, pulsating and undulating. This is what I pray for. I know that if I just stay there, suspended between the worlds, trusting the silence, eventually I will get a fresh flow of words in English that conveys some of the juiciness of the original mantric speech.

The Sanskrit of the text is incredibly succinct. Each of the 112 central verses describes a yoga technique (called a *dharana* or *yukti*) in six to twelve words, depending on how long the compounds are, using about three dozen Devanagari letters. At the speed of a professional chanter, each verse can be said in twelve seconds. They get their point across in twelve seconds! This brevity is a feat of engineering. The composers packed many bits of information into each syllable.

My preferred speed is very slow by comparison; I usually take about thirty seconds to say a verse. I like to linger with each sound and notice its effect on my nerves and the way the sequence of syllables activates or redirects the flow of prana in my body. Sanskrit has a tendency to keep on vibrating even when the verbal and subvocal repetition ceases. Over the years, I spent an hour or more with each word and a day, week, or month with each verse. The text is only a couple of thousand words, in 162 verses, so this is a doable task and great fun.

After immersing myself in the mantric quality of the text, I shift to the semantic level, and to that I add usage—the way the word is used in the tantric tradition.

The Language of Enchantment

Sanskrit is a language of enchantment, and chanting it takes you to an inner world we all share, a living, worldwide web woven from prana, the life force. Your body is the access portal. Touch a word with your awareness, and it begins to pulsate and shimmer, then tell you tales of its origin. Be alert, though—any word may allure you into a magic realm. The pulsation of consciousness is stirred as layers of meaning resonate in your heart and scintillating imagery lights up your inner vision. Suddenly, you are inside the awareness field of the sages and *rishis* of the Vedic tradition.

This is not a world of the past. It is a subtle level of the present—a friendly world, warm and musical. When you enter it, you feel as if you have happened upon some cheerful and gabby oldster storytellers sitting around a fire, eager for an audience, for fresh ears to regale with their tales. Once they let you in, you can't say, "Oh, I have to go. The phone is ringing." You have to stay until they finish the story, which may take several hours or days—or in my case, years.

This is Indra's net, the primordial consciousness net. Instead of taking you to every random thought anyone ever posted on some website, it takes you to the best thinking and feeling of the meditators and *rishis* throughout time. Their code is *samskrita,* an "artificial or constructed" language, intentionally devised to safeguard their realizations, the secrets they discovered in their caves and in the cave of the heart. It's the music of the heart. They invite you in: "Come sit by our fire, and we will tell you the truth. Your world needs this. Become a water-bearer, a conveyer of this wisdom."

Your body is the computer, your inner vision the screen, and you access it by meditating on the words. Each sound, word, and phrase resonates in the physical body, the emotional body, and throughout the subtle levels of your being. The internet being accessed is the vibrating field of intelligence permeating the space in which we breathe and think. Instead of using electricity, it uses the life force, the energy of breath.

Assembling the Mosaic

In order to attune myself to the richness of what Shakti and Shiva are singing to each other, I build a semantic web for each word of the text. This is a technique, borrowed from cognitive anthropology, for building a mosaic, or a mandala, of the meaning of a word.

The verses are made up of a dozen or fewer words each. I give every word of each sutra its own group of cards. Up to twenty-five cards represent the way the word is defined in the Monier-Williams *Sanskrit-English Dictionary.*[1] Another cluster of cards indicates how the term is used in the Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, and various texts of Kashmir Shaivism. The cards are spread out on the floor, and I walk around in them for a few hours or days, until I feel that the richness of the word is vibrating in my body. Then I lay out the cards for all dozen of the words in a particular sutra, and see what I've got. That is the mandala of the sutra. This detailed look at the individual words leads me into a deeper sense of what other workers in the field understand about the techniques being discussed.

Then I start to pray for English words and word sequences that resonate with the intention behind the Sanskrit. I may pace around among these cards for a week, just wondering and listening to the mantric quality of the Sanskrit and the corresponding English.

You can't sit still to do this type of writing. You have to walk, dance, stand, feel the earth beneath you, and open your arms wide to embrace the universe. You have to risk falling in love with the practices and be willing to be transformed by that love. Each time you approach a sutra, you have to approach it anew. Let the tantra sing to you and make your whole body vibrate with its song.

After looking at the pattern of cards on the floor for a while, a current of revelation begins to flow—sometimes immediately, other times after a few days or weeks. Sometimes I have to beg for mercy. "Come on, reveal yourself. I am hanging in suspense here. It's four in the morning, and I

have been showing up here for a month."

There are places where the Sanskrit is cryptic, as if to guard its secrets, and the scholarly translations have only hinted at the deeper meanings or spoken in technical language resembling computer code. In other places, the text is actually not obscure; it just assumes that you are sitting on a hillside in Kashmir with all the time in the world to ask your questions.

Keep in mind that all of the meditation methods presented in the Vijnana Bhairava Tantra are practical and very human—experiences of feeling at one with life, the kinds of things lovers and children know.

Multiple Levels of Meaning and Sound

Sanskrit is gloriously polysemous (*poly,* "many," plus *sema,* "sign"). Because there are multiple layers of information in each Sanskrit word and each layer evokes realms of wonder and awe, the Vijnana Bhairava Tantra reverberates with clues to multiple layers of experience. Everywhere in this text, the Sanskrit lexicon is used with superb skill to indicate nuances of meditative experience.

For example, verse 39 (sutra 16) describes a mantra practice. Bhairava uses the word *pluta,* defined in the Monier-Williams *Sanskrit-English Dictionary* as "floating, swimming in, bathed, overflowing, submerged, filled with, flooded." This is a remarkably sensuous description of the experience of meditating with a mantra—especially as attention shifts from verbal pronunciation to subvocal speech and then to the energy impulse of the sound as it dissolves into oceanic silence. If you interview mantra yoga practitioners and ask them what they experience as they melt into silence, you'll get these sorts of descriptions. Those who know how to meditate deeply with sound often say, spontaneously, "I feel flooded by the mantra, floating with it, bathed in the sound." The usual translation of *pluta* is simply "protracted."

When working on my latest version of the sutras, I prefer to use as much of the full semantic range of each word as I can fit onto the page without cluttering up the flow. If you ever wonder where a metaphor in a particular sutra came from, just look in the Sanskrit-English dictionary and follow the trail.

The language of the sutras is coded as densely as if you said in English, "B. B. King, Clapton, Hendrix, Paige." That is eight syllables evoking a style, a set list, a series of legendary, era-defining performances by these adept guitar players, and the awakening that the music evoked in the listeners. Or think of these eight syllables: *Bach, Beethoven, Wagner, Mozart.* Just these few words evoke worlds of revelatory beauty.

Each thirty-two-syllable verse of the Vijnana Bhairava Tantra is a message sent to the future: "Here is the greatest thing I have ever learned. I have encoded it so there is not one extra syllable, one extraneous thought. It's as perfect, polished, purified, consecrated—as *saṃskṛita*—as I know how to make it. My prayer is that this message makes it through to you intact, you who will be born in a distant time and place."

The text is saying, "Here are 112 yoga practices, each described in about a dozen seconds of chanting. We call them *yuktis,* and each is a gateway into divine awareness. Cherish these as a treasure, a gift from us to you."

In addition to technical information regarding the skills of meditation, the verses convey images and jokes. The composers were irrepressible punsters. When Devi dares her lover,

Bhairava, to speak the secrets of yoga, she uses the word *samshaya,* one of the meanings of which is "doubt." The primary dictionary definition of the word, however, is "lying down to rest or sleep," from *sam* ("together") and *shaya* ("lying, sleeping"). *Shaya* also means, "a bed, a couch." This is the second sentence Devi speaks, and already she is suggesting that perhaps they can lie down together and he can tell her all about it.

The language of the Vijnana Bhairava Tantra abounds in earthy humor and sexual innuendo. When Bhairava describes the yoga of kissing in sutra 47 (verse 70), the word he uses is *lehana.* Usually translated as "kissing," *lehana's* actual definition is "the act of licking, tasting, or lapping with the tongue." To lovers, *licking* is an utterly different word than *kissing.* When monks and nuns translate this word, they edit out the juiciness.

There are images everywhere in the Sanskrit, and I have attempted to use as many as possible so that you can access the visceral experience of the practice that is being described. Some translations of this tantra are so abstruse that even if you have been doing one of the practices described in a verse for years, you can't recognize it.

Rasa, used in sutra 49, has the basic sense of "juice" (of plants or fruit) and "the best or finest or prime part of anything, essence, marrow, liquor, drink, syrup, elixir, potion, nectar, semen, taste, flavor, love, affection, desire, charm, pleasure, delight." *Rasa* is also aesthetic relish—"the taste or character of a work, the feeling or sentiment prevailing in a work of art."

Nitya, used in sutra 109, is often translated as "eternal," but its full definition is more personal: "innate, native, one's own, continual, perpetual, eternal, constantly dwelling or engaged in, intent upon, devoted or used to, the sea, the ocean."

These terms, and many others, have oceanic semantic fields. I don't attempt to reduce them to a corresponding word of English in a one-to-one mapping. Rather, I set the mantra-field vibrating and listen for English that hints at the mystery.

In addition to the semantic field of each word, there is the sound of it, which is often succulent. Sanskrit is designed to be euphonic, both to the physical ears and to the internal hearing. The verses are intended to be chanted and to convey messages in rhythm. Levels of sound and silence open up, and the chant gets more and more interesting as it gets quieter and quieter. In yoga there is the concept of four levels of sound:

Vaikhari-vak, the spoken word, where there are syllables, words, and sentences;
Madhyama-vak, the in-between or middle sound, subvocal speech, the sound you hear in your mind;
Pashyanti-vak, seeing, sensing, and beholding the vibratory effect of the word;
Para-vak, the transcendental sound.

In between each level of sound are exquisite transitional areas, where one sound melts into the other. I ask the Sanskrit of the sutra to repeat itself like a mantra in my heart, so that I can listen with every cell of my body. I am willing to be pulsed by the fluctuations and impulses that the sounds set up in my nerve circuits and the cool flame that flows along my spine. After a while I become enchanted. Often, a soft, warm luminosity fills the room. Even though it is before dawn, the atmosphere becomes kind of rockin'.

I ride the *vak* elevator up and down, a whispered *vaikhari-vak* to *madhyama-vak* to *pashyanti-vak.* I

inhabit the vibrating energy field at the level just before thoughts become words. This feels like being in a hot tub of prana, with bubbles of tingling impulses everywhere. Then I let the impulses that gave rise to the Sanskrit give me English words, which I sort of sand down a bit, like a woodworker, so they are smooth.

This is very physical work, letting the sutra hit you and then responding to it. Because the sutras are so varied, I find it's best if my posture also varies, so I flow between walking, standing, swaying, dancing, lying down, and sometimes sitting still. Each posture or asana allows me to hear different currents of revelation. In this way, I let the chord of the sutra strike me, then I seek words that articulate the experience.

In places, Sanskrit is consciously onomatopoeic: if you listen to it sensitively, something in the sound of the words and rhythm of the chanting evokes in you a feeling of what is being described. The words resonate simultaneously on all levels: physical, sensual, emotional, mental, and spiritual. In so doing, they evoke a vibrational integration or correspondence among all these levels. This multidimensionality provides endless possibilities for jokes, plays on words, and double and multiple entendres.

There is something more in Sanskrit: in certain words there is a mystery beyond onomatopoeia. An ancestral memory is invoked, echoes of ancient altars—a feeling of communion from heart to heart going back through the ages to the primordial ur-language, the first attempt to name things.

Softly I chant in Sanskrit, savoring its sound for a while, and then let it echo inside me, moving energies around in my body until I get corresponding English words. I look up the root structure of the words to track how they metamorphosed over the ages from Indo-European through Greek and Latin into modern English. I am like a hunter following a trail through a forest wet with dew, in the lively darkness before dawn, knowing that just around the hill over there I will find what I am seeking.

THE PLAY OF SANSKRIT AND ENGLISH

Sanskrit is finely crafted, designed for use in the oral tradition, in which important meditative texts and revelations are memorized, chanted, and passed on over many generations. It was built to last. Because of this sacredness, Sanskrit appears to be fixed in time, not developing, evolving, or adding new words. It is considered a liturgical language, and it is as frozen as a bug in amber. Sanskrit is the language of the ancient texts, but not the language people use to talk about their experience and their life in the present.

The population of India is more than a billion, and yet according to the 1991 census there were a total of 49,736 fluent speakers of Sanskrit—about .005 percent of the population. The 2001 census found that 14,135 listed Sanskrit as their mother tongue.[2] For decades, there have been attempts in India to revive Sanskrit and encourage students to learn it. The High Court of Madras had to rule in 1998 that Sanskrit is "not a dead language."

The English language is in many ways the opposite of Sanskrit. English is a wild, ever-changing, ever-evolving language, always in search of the next adaptation of itself, always transforming to meet the future, always redefining its words according to popular usage. English is as brilliant in

its unperfectedness as Sanskrit is in its perfection.

As part of its adaptability, English is always adding new words, including words from Sanskrit, such as *pranayama* and *bhakti*. It's doing so because Sanskrit words are so useful for describing states of consciousness and yoga practice, which more and more English speakers are exploring.

A nationwide survey conducted by the United States government in 2007 found that 9.4 percent of the adult population had practiced meditation in the previous year, representing about twenty million people.[3] About the same number of people had practiced yoga in 2007. All of these meditation and yoga practitioners reach for words to describe the subtleties of their experiences and what they are feeling. As they do, they use the occasional Sanskrit word, which then becomes part of conversational English. Writers take part in these conversations and then confidently use a Sanskrit word here and there while writing for magazines, newspapers, blogs, novels, nonfiction books, songs, and movies. Then it moves to the global scale, such as the Gayatri mantra used in the movie *The Matrix* and Madonna chanting *shanti* in a pop song. In this way Sanskrit words are steadily added to English vocabulary. This has been going on for at least 150 years, since Emerson and Thoreau and others began reading translations of the Upanishads and Bhagavad Gita and then talking and writing about what they love in these ancient texts. Thus, Sanskrit words like *yoga, mantra, guru, chakra, dharma, karma,* and *avatar* are now a lively part of American discourse.

The Vijnana Bhairava Tantra begins with these words: *sri devi uvacha shrutam deva maya sarvam rudra yamala sambhavam.* Five of these ten words are already in English dictionaries: *sri, devi, shruti, deva, rudra.* Others words from the text that have made it into English dictionaries are *agni, akasha, amrita, ananda, bhakti, Brahma, buddhi, dhyana, Durga, Gita, guru, Indra, indriya, kama, Krishna, Kali, maha, mahatma, manas, Marut, maya, moksha, Mitra, prana, pranava, puja, Rudra, sadhu, Shakti, Shanti, Shiva, shunya, tamas, tantra, tattva, and veda.*

Swami Yogakanti of the Bihar School points out that as Sanskrit words become English, various spellings and pronunciations are explored. This always happens when words migrate from one culture to another: their pronunciations change, because each language has unique sounds, and then the words are spelled differently, according to whatever system the receiving language uses. For example, the Sanskrit word for meditation, *dhyana,* became *chan* in China, and in Japan it became *zen.*

It doesn't help that English has a crazy spelling system, and words are often not written as they sound. (Linguists describe English spelling as chaotic, erratic, and irrational.) So when ancient Sanskrit words are brought into English, they are going from the most precise spelling system on earth into a raucous and wacky system, where they are misspelled and mispronounced, which is why we have so many creative variations in spelling among different English texts. Unfortunately, the semantic range is also reduced.

Something similar happened a thousand years ago, when tantric teachings were taken from India to Tibet and translated into Tibetan. In *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism* (London: Rider and Co., 1959, 27), Lama Govinda remarks:

> If the efficacy of mantras depended on their correct pronunciation, then all mantras in Tibet would have lost their meaning and power, because they are not pronounced according to the rules of Sanskrit, but according to the phonetic laws of the Tibetan language (for instance not: OṀ MANI PADME HŪṀ, but 'OṀ MAṆI Péme HŪṀ').

> This means that the power and the effect of a mantra depend on the spiritual attitude, the knowledge and responsiveness of the individual. The śabda or sound of the mantra is not a physical one (though it may be accompanied by such a one) but a spiritual one. It cannot be heard by the ears but only by the heart, and it cannot be uttered by the mouth but only by the mind.

Harvey Alper notes in his encyclopedic *Understanding Mantras* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008, 443):

> And, then, there is the knotty problem of pronunciation. Americans, after all, do not get the sound right. This is bound to be troubling. From the Vedic age to the present day, in mantras the sound is the thing. An apologist might respond, neither do Indians. The Vedic ideal notwithstanding, there is no single absolutely correct way to pronounce Sanskrit, as regional variations in pronunciation, not to mention the migration of mantras from India to Central Asia and East Asia, abundantly prove.

Shakti or *sakti, Shiva* or *siva, chakra* or *cakra*—it is anyone's guess how these words will be spelled and pronounced as they enter wider usage.

You say *Shakti,* and I say *sakti.*
You say *Shiva,* and I say *siva.*
Let's call the whole thing off.

Apologies and an offering of *soma* to appease Panini,[4] who is running up quite a tab, as we all continue this scandalous enterprise of receiving Sanskrit, finding it useful, and putting it to work in our daily lives while we explore the impact of yoga and meditative disciplines.

OTHER VERSIONS OF THE BHAIRAVA TANTRA

I am very grateful to the students, scholars and disciples who have worked to make the Vijnana Bhairava Tantra available in various translations. Many of these writers learned the teaching directly from Lakshman Joo (1907–1991), a renowned sage and scholar of Kashmir Shaivism.

As far as I can ascertain, *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones,* by Paul Reps, was first published by Doubleday in 1957 and is still in print. This was the first book on meditation I ever held in my hands, in 1968. It's how I began this whole adventure.

The entire Bhairava Tantra is condensed into one section at the end of the book, the rest of which is Zen stories. Reps, in his introduction, said that he started with an English version by Lakshman Joo and then did eleven more drafts until he got it into the form that he published as "Centering." The whole text is only sixteen pages, about eight verses per page. The English is beautiful and simple. It has a somewhat beatnik flavor to it, *dig it:* "Consider your essence as light rays rising from center to center up the vertebrae, and so rises *livingness* in you." For decades, I couldn't imagine any other way of reading the sutras.

The Paul Reps translation was used by Osho (Rajneesh) in his exuberant *Book of Secrets* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2010), based on a series of lectures he gave. He goes on for more than

thirteen hundred pages in his talks on the 112 meditations of the text.

Vijnana Bhairava: The Manual for Self-Realization, by Swami Lakshmanjoo and edited by John Hughes (Culver City, CA: Universal Shaiva Fellowship, 2007), is seven audio CDs (plus a 225-page book) of Lakshman Joo teaching the Vijnana Bhairava Tantra, chanting the Sanskrit, and then explaining the practices. This is the authoritative version of Lakshman Joo's transmission on the Bhairava Tantra. (Note: Hughes prefers to spell the author's name *Lakshmanjoo;* I prefer *Lakshman Joo.* In a debate, he would win.) Each of the verses is given in Devanagari (Sanskrit's written form), with a Romanized transliteration and pronunciation guide, plus a link to the place on the audio CDs where you can listen to Lakshman Joo chanting the verse and commenting on it.

John and Denise Hughes were trained by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi as teachers of Transcendental Meditation in India in 1969. During the training, Maharishi asked Lakshman Joo to come speak to the students. Several years later, in 1971, John and Denise returned to India to study with Lakshman Joo. John made tape recordings of Lakshman Joo's teachings and transcribed them, then went over the transcriptions with him. John and Denise have studied these teachings for decades and are custodians of Lakshman Joo's lectures.

Lilian Silburn's 1961 book *Le Vijnanabhairava Tantra: Publications de l'Institut de Civilisation Indienne* is in French. If you don't speak the language, find a French speaker, perhaps a poet, and have her read it to you. That is what I did, and it was wonderful. She spoke the text in French and then translated, on the fly, into English. Lilian's writing is imbued with a sensual flow and vibrancy. She is another of those who studied with Lakshman Joo in India. To get a feeling for her approach to this tradition, there is an English version of her *Kundalini: The Energy of the Depths,* translated by Jacques Gontier, published by State University of New York Press in 1988. Silburn's writing has an embodied feel to it, and she is not afraid to speak of arousing the vibratory energies and letting the sacred liquor flow.

Jaideva Singh is another of those who studied at the feet of Lakshman Joo. I came across his *Vijnanabhairava or Divine Consciousness: A Treasury of 112 Types of Yoga* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1979) soon after it was published, through contacts at the Siddha Yoga organization.

The book begins with a blessing by Swami Muktananda. Jaideva Singh's writing is dense, and his translation and commentary explain some of the techniques with notes, footnotes, asides, and references to technical terms. It has a dry, scholarly, academic flavor. I have consulted it extensively over the past twenty-eight years and have worn out several copies. Fortunately it has been reprinted as *The Yoga of Delight, Wonder and Astonishment: A Translation of the Vijnana-Bhairava* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991). An excellent part of the SUNY edition is the ten-page foreword by Paul Muller-Ortega, in which he gives an overview of the relevance of the Vijnana Bhairava Tantra in the tradition of Kashmir Shaivism.

In 2002, Indica Books of Varanasi, India, published *Vijnana Bhairava: The Practice of Centring Awareness; Commentary by Swami Lakshman Joo.* (Yes, they spell it *centring.*) According to the introduction, "three disciples of Lakshman Joo" collaborated to put forth this version: Bettina Baumer and Sarla Kumar edited Lakshman Joo's notes, and Prabha Devi wrote a foreword. But this Sanskrit translation and commentary appears to be lifted, without giving credit, from notes and transcripts of the audio recordings by John and Denise Hughes as they interviewed Lakshman Joo. What apparently happened was that over the years, as John and Denise completed different drafts of their manuscript, they gave copies of the work in progress to Lakshman Joo, who made his

mahasamadhi in 1991. A few years later, Prabha Devi felt inspired to reveal this treasure, this gift of the master's divine grace, to Dr. Sarla Kumar and Dr. Bettina Baumer, other students of the master. According to John Hughes, in the preface to his *Vijnana Bhairava: The Manual for Self-Realization,* the Indica edition is based on his preliminary manuscript and is "both incomplete and fraught with mistakes."

This story tells us a couple of things about the tantric tradition, besides the fact that it is a far-flung communion of passionate, individualistic people. It often happens that a disciple will do years or even a lifetime of work, then take no credit and give all honor to the guru. This is in keeping with the egolessness of disciples. There is a humility we all feel in response to the gushing wisdom behind these teachings.

One of the gracious things scholars do is point to everyone from whom they have drawn inspiration. It's called a footnote. But in the tantric tradition, by its very nature, people are off doing their own wildly idiosyncratic thing, making music, making babies, and dancing.

If you look in the backs of the translations I cite here, they do not make any mention of each other. It could be that they are working with a theory of immaculate conception. I make no such claims—I've devotedly read all the other translations of the Vijnana Bhairava Tantra cited here, dozens or hundreds of times. Their work has helped mine immeasurably. I can't thank them enough. Each one brings out and illuminates different aspects of these extremely condensed sutras.

Sri Vijnana Bhairava Tantra: The Ascent, by Swami Satyasangananda Saraswati (Yoga Munger, India: Publications Trust, Bihar School of Yoga, 2003), is a magnificent work of scholarship, and at 499 pages, it is among the most comprehensive of the translations described here. It is also very readable. The book includes a ninety-page introductory section. Each verse is given in Devanagari, followed by a transliteration with word boundaries indicated and component terms defined, thus including a full glossary for every word of each verse.

Swami Satyasangananda is female and has brought brilliant intellectual clarity and rich feeling to the text. I adore her at a distance. She was initiated into *sannyasa* in 1982 by Swami Satyananda of the Bihar School. She makes no mention of Lakshman Joo, so apparently this is a separate line of transmission of the teachings. There are some differences in the way she unfolds the descriptions of the techniques, compared to the other translators. She lives in a religious order and has taken vows (including celibacy, I imagine), and therefore she often tilts her translations in the direction of renunciation and suppressing desire, which is entirely appropriate for a renouncer. As much as it is possible for a nun from India to speak to us in the West, she has.

Daniel Odier included a short translation of the Bhairava Tantra in an appendix to his book *Yoga Spandakarika: The Sacred Texts at the Origins of Tantra* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2005). His version has a free-flowing quality. Each verse or technique is translated in two or three sentences, and the entire appendix is only eighteen pages. He attempts to briefly describe each method and leaves terms such as *Bhairava, Bhairavi, Shakti,* and *Shiva* untranslated. Daniel is an initiate of Tibetan Buddhism, Kashmir Shaivism, and Zen. He lives in Paris and teaches in Europe and the United States.

Eric Baret is another French writer and teacher in the tradition of Kashmir Shaivism, based in Paris. One day in 1993, I was visiting Santa Fe, New Mexico. By then early drafts of *The Radiance Sutras* had been circulating around the United States and Europe, and somehow a copy came into

Eric's hands. He lives in France and happened to be visiting Santa Fe at the same time. Out of the blue he called, introduced himself, and said, "I am in town. Let's get together!" Eric showed up at my door, radiating joy. Over the course of several days, he generously went over the manuscript with me line by line and gave me valuable tips and corrections. Thank you, Eric!

Mark S. G. Dyczkowski is a tantric scholar researching what he calls Kashmiri Shaivism, and his work has been a great help to me in understanding the layers of meaning in some of the words used in the Bhairava Tantra. His book *The Doctrine of Vibration* (Albany: State University Press of New York, 1987) is an example of research combining passion and intellectual clarity.

Dmitri Semenov published (in June 2010) a translation of the Vijnana Bhairava Tantra, available from the self-publishing website Lulu (lulu.com). Dmitri writes, "The interpretation is almost never literal, but interpretive. The interpretation relies heavily on my own personal experiences." Dmitri is a Russian mathematician and a student of tantra, and he brings a refreshing tone of precision to the translation.

Each of these translations brings out different nuances of the information coded into the text. Layers of sound and meaning are playing, and you can choose to listen to one layer or the interaction of two, three, four, or more layers. In *The Tantric Body,* Gavin Flood discusses the optative mood in Tantric texts and points out that "the main verb, 'he should meditate' . . . is in the third-person singular optative, a mood which, according to the famous grammarian Panini, is used in five senses: to denote a command *(vidhi),* a summons *(nimantrana),* an invitation *(amantrana),* a respectful command *(adhista),* an enquiry *(samprasna)* or a request *(prarthana)*" (London, I. B. Tauris, 2006, 179; diacritical marks omitted). This is brilliant semantic engineering. Each of these tones is profound and has its place; the optative mood gives you options.

As Flood and Panini point out, what is often translated as "He should meditate" can be taken simultaneously as a command, summons, invitation, inquiry, and a request. In a text such as the Bhairava Tantra, the sentence "He should meditate," although semantically correct, is a bit insulting to Shakti. It is as if a group of elite males, impressed with their own importance and erudition, are proclaiming to each other how clever they are: "The *yogi* should meditate either in the heart or in the *dvadashanta*" (verse 37, corresponding to sutra 14). That is not how you enter these practices if you are in a Western body and a householder.

I find the *invitation* mood to be much friendlier (*amantrana,* "inviting, speaking to, calling to, greeting, welcome"). The Radiance Sutras is a *bhashantaram,* a rendering of the text into the vernacular. Therefore, I have structured the language to be engaging and inviting, not distancing and elitist. I have taken as the basic *mood* of discourse the sense that Bhairava is speaking to our bodies through Devi's body, through her shakti, which is our very life force; this is happening now, in the present moment, because Bhairava and Devi are always present; and these are not merely esoteric techniques being discussed, but openings or doorways into the sacred that are available to us all in the rhythm of a day. In the text, Devi is already enlightened, but she is asking to be reminded of the ways in which a being who is immersed in creation can wake up to infinity again. Bhairava is her lover, and he adoringly complies.

When I first looked at the Vijnana Bhairava Tantra in 1968, it was as if Devi handed me a ball of light and said, "Here—here are the teachings you have been looking for. Step into this reality. Live and breathe it. Share it with all who come your way and ask." Not knowing any better, that's what I did. I just accepted the ball and ran with it, never looking back.

These forty-some years have been, and continue to be, a journey of wonder and delight.

NOTES

1. Sir Monier Monier-Williams, A Sanskrit-English Dictionary, etymologically and philologically arranged, with special reference to cognate Indo-European languages. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1899).
2. Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, "Statement 1: Abstract of Speakers' Strength of Languages and Mother Tongues, 2001." Available online at censusindia.gov.in/Census_Data_2001/Census_Data_Online/Language/Statement1.htm. Arvind Kala, "Hegemony of Hindi," The *Times of India* (January 6, 2007). Sujay Rao Mandavilli, "Sanskrit and Prakrit as National Link Languages: A Balanced Assessment," *Language in India* 8 (May 5, 2008).
3. P. M. Barnes, B. Bloom, and R. Nahin, CDC National Health Statistics Report #12, "Complementary and Alternative Medicine Use Among Adults and Children: United States, 2007" (December 2008).
4. Panini, often considered the greatest linguistic genius of all time, set forth the rules of Sanskrit morphology in 3,959 sutras, in a text of eight chapters called the Ashtadhyayi, thus defining classical Sanskrit. The text is the oldest existing grammar in any language, and research is still being done on the subtleties of Panini's rules, to shed light on how human language works. He is thought to have been born in Northwest India, in what is now Pakistan, and to have lived in the sixth, fifth, or fourth century BC. According to the Panchatantra, Panini was killed by a lion. Speculation ever since has been that the lion was the reincarnation of a Brahmin priest whose life was ruined when he couldn't remember one of Panini's 3,959 rules during an important recitation on *Hindu Idol.*

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For the past few years, musicians Dave Stringer, Denise Kaufman, Donna DeLory, Joni Allen, C. C. White, Christine Stevens, Steve Gold, Joey Lugassy, Ena Vie, Howard Lipp, Zoe Elton, Dearbhla Kelly, and others have been putting the Radiance Sutras to song. This has evolved into jam sessions, called Sutra Sessions, in which musicians and singers improvise to the Sutras. These sessions are ecstatic and amazing. We often have an open mike, and members of the audience come up and read their favorite Sutra. Join our mailing list to find out about events near you.

Dave Stringer, Donna DeLory, Joni Allen, and others have been composing and recording stunningly beautiful songs of the Radiance Sutras. For a free download of one of the Radiance Sutras put to music, visit lorinroche.com.

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Camille Maurine, my Shakti, wife, and creative partner, just by walking through the room illuminated many teachings in this text. Camille also spoke the verses to me many times, dancing while she edited.

Denise Kaufman created, in collaboration with Dave Stringer, the Sutra Sessions, live jam sessions with musicians improvising to the Radiance Sutras. Sean Johnson and Gwen Colman brought their New Orleans groove to the sutras. Joey Lugassy, Donna De Lory, Christine Stevens, Joni Allen, C. C. White, Craig Kohland, Steve Gold, and others have given their gift of music to the school of sutra rock.

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The brilliant Shiva Rea and the wildly wonderful tribe she has called together have embraced me and enriched my understanding of Shakti immeasurably. May Devi bless their community.

About the Author

Lorin Roche, PhD, began exploring the 112 meditations of the Vijnana Bhairava Tantra in 1968, and it has been a nonstop love affair ever since. He began meditating as part of a scientific research study at the University of California and was soon assisting the research and training subjects to meditate. After advanced training as a meditation teacher in 1970, Lorin taught in think tanks, universities, military bases, high schools, hospitals, retreat centers, and private homes. He was involved in the physiological research on meditation until 1975, when he switched to studying the emotional and subjective experience of meditation. Lorin received a doctorate from the University of California at Irvine in 1987. In his research, he used the tools of cognitive anthropology to study the language of experience—the way meditators describe their inner worlds. His master's degree research investigated the hazards of meditation and the crisis points in a meditator's development; practicing the wrong technique for your personality and body type can produce harmful effects, and even the right type of meditation can challenge your system and produce evolutionary crises.

Lorin is a pioneer in developing personalized meditation practices, designing the techniques around an individual's inner nature. In addition to *The Radiance Sutras,* Lorin is the author of five books on the life-affirming path of meditation, including *Meditation Secrets for Women,* written with his wife, Camille Maurine.

Lorin's teaching celebrates individual uniqueness and aims at activating your internal guidance systems and bringing forth your instinctive knowing. In order to transmit the joyous wisdom of the Radiance Sutras, Lorin has created two related meditation systems: Pranava Meditation®, which utilizes the richness of the Sanskrit language and is oriented toward the yoga community, and Freedom Meditation®, which uses common sense terminology and focuses on inner knowing. He teaches and consults worldwide with businesses and universities to create custom meditation programs that suit their needs and cultures. For more information on private coaching, lectures, workshops, teleseminars, and meditation teacher training, visit lorinroche.com or contact him via email at lorin@lorinroche.com.

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